

PROVINCETOWN ARTS

us \$15 canada \$19 volume 33 annual issue 2018/19

featuring

HELEN FRANKENTHALER
PAUL LISICKY

plus FINE ARTS WORK CENTER at 50





THE
SCHOOLHOUSE GALLERY



SARAH LUTZ

AUGUST 10 – 29, 2018

494 COMMERCIAL STREET PROVINCETOWN MA
02657 508.487.4800 WWW.GALLERY SCHOOLHOUSE.COM



ABSTRACT CLIMATES

HELEN FRANKENTHALER IN PROVINCETOWN

ON VIEW AT PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM
JULY 6 - SEPTEMBER 2, 2018

CURATED BY LISE MOTHERWELL AND ELIZABETH SMITH



460 COMMERCIAL STREET | PROVINCETOWN MA 02657 | 508-487-1750 | WWW.PAAM.ORG | @PAAM1914

HELEN FRANKENTHALER, CODE SUMMER, 1962, OIL ON CANVAS, 69 3/4 X 120 INCHES (177.2 X 304.8 CM). COLLECTION HELEN FRANKENTHALER FOUNDATION, NEW YORK.
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ART

PROVINCETOWN ART OLD AND NEW

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Since 1980

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FINE ARTS WORK CENTER 50

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS 1968-2018 CREATIVITY THRIVES HERE

EXHIBITIONS

MAY 11 – JUNE 17 Celebrating 50 Years of the Fine Arts Work Center
Provincetown Art Association and Museum

MAY 25 – JULY 14 The Work Center Takes Wing: Founders & Friends
Fine Arts Work Center

JUNE 16 – DECEMBER 31 A Tribute to Salvatore & Josephine Del Deo
Provincetown Pilgrim Monument and Museum

JUNE 1 – SEPTEMBER 9 Connections: Visual Fellows of Cape Cod
Cape Cod Museum of Art

JULY 22 – AUGUST 30 Ai Weiwei: Rebar and Case
Fine Arts Work Center

AUGUST 10-17 42nd Annual Art Auction Preview
Fine Arts Work Center



GALLERY TRIBUTES

MAY 25 – JUNE 16 – Berta Walker Gallery

MAY 11 – JUNE 11 – Schoolhouse Gallery

ONGOING – Albert Merola Gallery



NIGHTLY READINGS, ARTIST TALKS & OPEN STUDIOS

Monday through Thursday



FAWC.ORG

24 Pearl Street Provincetown, MA 02657 508.487.9960

The Fine Arts Work Center is an equal opportunity provider and employer. The Work Center facilities are accessible to people with disabilities.

EVENTS & WORKSHOPS

JUNE 10 – AUGUST 24

Workshops in Creative Writing & Visual Arts

JUNE 27 – AUGUST 9

Music: The Lyric Series

JULY 20

Ai Weiwei: Private Opening & Conversation

JULY 21

Summer Awards Celebration

JULY 22-27

Artists and Writers as Activists

AUGUST 5-10

Annual Poetry Festival & Favorite Poem Project

AUGUST 18

42nd Annual Art Auction



GRÚPA

JULY 28 - SEPTEMBER 8, 2018
SUMMER PARTY: July 28th, 6 - 9

painting
prints
sculpture



Petrovich - Cheney, "Gee Whiz", salvaged wood, 24"x24"x2"

music
food
libations

REBECCA WELZ

Barbara KRUGER

C.R. GRIGG

PAUL BOWEN

JENNIFER ELLWOOD

DAVID LOEFFLER SMITH

LAURA PETROVICH - CHENEY

CherryStoneGallery

70 East Commercial Street
Wellfleet, MA 02667
508 . 246 . 5486
www.cherrystonegallery.com

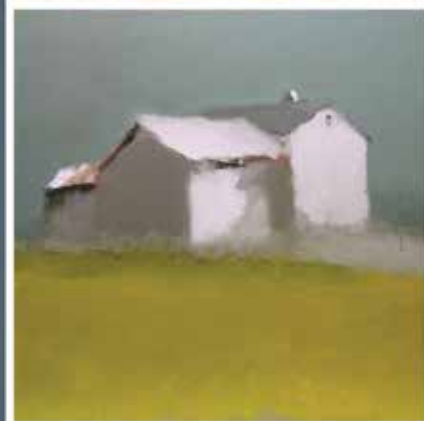
Monday through Saturday 2-7 pm

BAILEY BOB BAILEY

REPRESENTED BY THE SCHOOLHOUSE GALLERY



EIGHT 2018 mixed media on panel



RICE POLAK GALLERY

430 commercial street
provincetown ma 02657
508 . 487 . 1052
ricepolakgallery.com

CATHERINE MOSLEY DIAMONDS

SEPTEMBER 7,
OCTOBER 7, 2018

A.I.R. GALLERY
155 Plymouth Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Wed-Sun 12pm-6pm | 212.2556651 | info@airgallery.org | www.airgallery.org

ALDEN GALLERY



MIKE WRIGHT



ANNE SALAS



ALICE DENISON



PAUL KELLY



KEVIN CYR



JOERG DRESSLER

May 25 – June 14, 2018:
GROUP SHOW of all gallery artists
June 15 – June 18, 2018:
Cathleen Daley and Alice Denison
June 29 – July 12, 2018:
Robert Glisson, Linda Reedy and Anne Salas
July 13 – July 26, 2018:
Sean McCabe and Robert Morgan
July 27 – August 9, 2018:
Paul Kelly and Mike Wright
August 10 – August 23, 2018:
Joerg Dressler and Kirk Jenkins
August 24 – September 6, 2018:
Kevin Cyr and Laurence Young
September 7 – January 1, 2019:
GROUP SHOW of gallery all artists—
Ed Christie, Kevin Cyr, Cathleen Daley,
Alice Denison, Joerg Dressler, Robert Glisson,
Raúl Gonzalez III, Paul Kelly, Sean McCabe,
Robert Morgan, Linda Reedy, Anne Salas,
Mike Wright, Laurence Young.

423 Commercial Street
www.aldengallery.com
T 508.487.4230
E aldengallery@gmail.com
IG @aldengallery
Open year round—daily during season

PROVINCETOWN

AGAINST FORGETTING I GROUP EXHIBITION

May 25 - July 10

GINA OSTERLOH + BRIE RUAIS

July 13 - August 7

GARY KUEHN

July 27 - August 21

MARTIN MANNIG

August 10 - September 4

ERIKA WASTROM

September 7 - October 7

PATRICE APHRODITE HELMAR

September 7 - October 7

GAA GALLERY

WELLFLEET

AGAINST FORGETTING II GROUP EXHIBITION

May 26 - July 1

JUDY PFAFF

July 7 - August 11

SHEILAH WILSON RESTACK + DANI LEVENTHAL RESTACK

August 16 - October 6

494 COMMERCIAL ST (ENTRANCE ON HOWLAND ST) PROVINCETOWN MA 02657 TEL +1 508 413 9621

230B MAIN ST WELLFLEET MA 02667 TEL +1 508 214 0281 WWW.GAA-GALLERY.COM

DEBRA FORCE FINE ART SALUTES THE CAHOON MUSEUM'S EXHIBITION

HERMAN MARIL: THE STRONG FORMS OF OUR EXPERIENCE

AUGUST 17 - OCTOBER 28



HERMAN MARIL (1908-1986), *STILL WATERS*, 1973, OIL ON CANVAS, 60 X 40 IN.

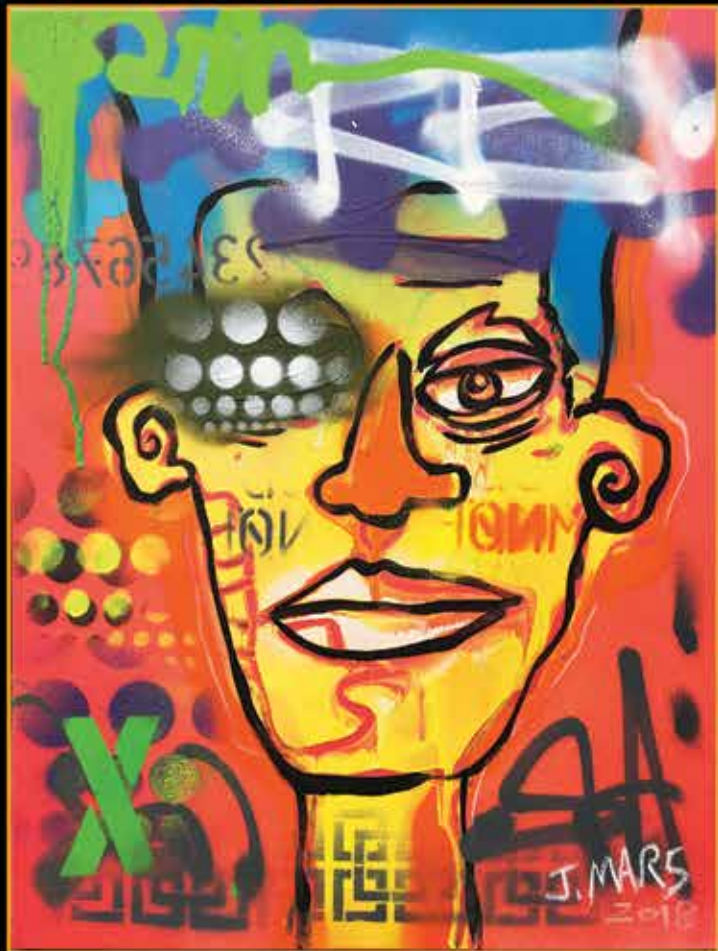
DEBRA FORCE FINE ART REPRESENTS THE ESTATE OF HERMAN MARIL AND WILL FEATURE HIS PROVINCETOWN PAINTINGS IN AN EXHIBITION AT THE GALLERY SEPTEMBER 5 - OCTOBER 19. PLEASE CONTACT US FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

Debra Force FINE ART, INC.

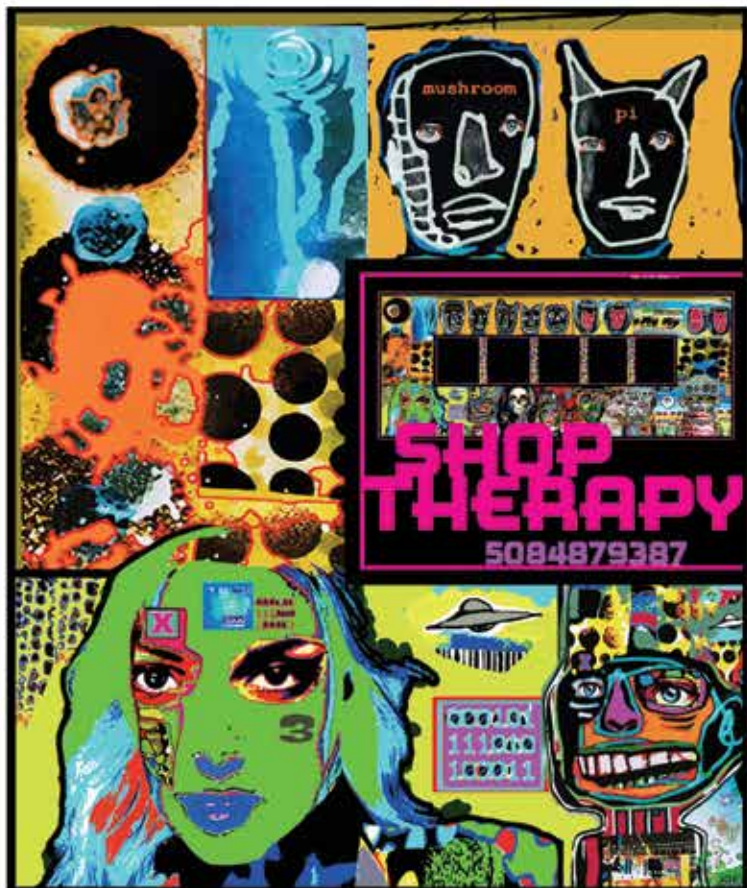
13 EAST 69TH STREET SUITE 4F NEW YORK 10021 TEL 212.734.3636 WWW.DEBRAFORCE.COM

FACIAL RECOGNITION

NEW WORKS BY JOEY MARS



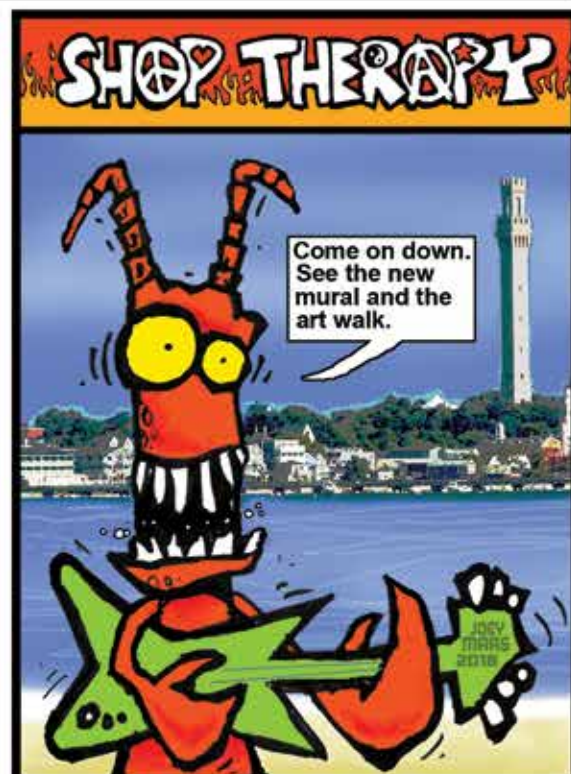
WOODMAN SHIMKO GALLERY
OPENING RECEPTION JULY 27 6-8 PM
398 COMMERCIAL ST. PROVINCETOWN
JULY 27 - AUGUST 7, 2018 JOEYMARS.COM



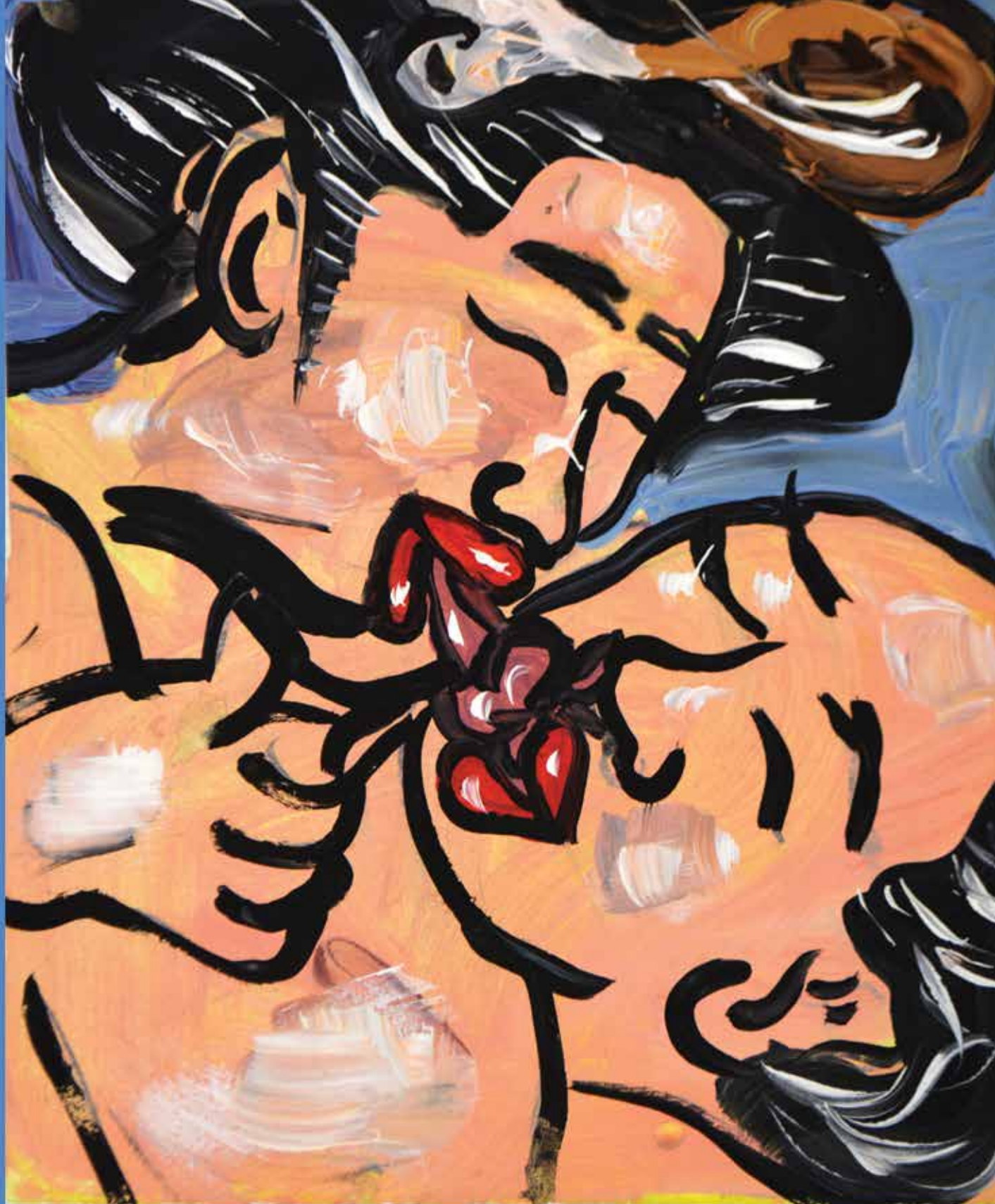
288 COMM. ST. PROVINCETOWN SHOPTHERAPY.COM
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2ND FLOOR: CANNABIS ACCESSORIES, EROTICA



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ETHAN COHEN



Banyan Tree, 2017. Michele Oka Doner, artist
40 x 60 inches . oil & digital collage on canvas

RAY ELMAN

COMMISSIONED PORTRAITS



Rock in the Wind, 2012. Jhumpa Lahiri, author
60 x 40 inches . oil & digital collage on canvas
Collection: Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery

WWW.RAYMONDELMAN.COM
raymondelman@gmail.com
617 . 515 . 2311



Irene Lipton

Albert Merola Gallery

424 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA
508-487-4424
albertmerolagallery.com



KOBALT GALLERY

Tim Satermow, 41 Union Square West, 2017, Watercolor and Cold Wax on Paper; Mounted on Canvas, 26"x18"

2018 KOBALT GALLERY ARTISTS: SEAN FLOOD • JESSICA PISANO • TIM SATERNOW • CHERIE MITTENTHAL • TED POLOMIS
DUNCAN JOHNSON • JOE LANDRY • JESSICA BRILLI • DAVE LARO • HELEN SHULMAN • JON DAVENPORT & MILENKO KATIC

ABSTRACT CLIMATES

HELEN FRANKENTHALER IN PROVINCETOWN

ON VIEW AT PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM
JULY 6 - SEPTEMBER 2, 2018

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

FRIDAY, JULY 6 | 11AM-3PM
Members Only Preview of
Abstract Climates: Helen Frankenthaler in Provincetown
FREE FOR MEMBERS

FRIDAY, JULY 6 | 8-10PM
Public opening of Abstract Climates:
Helen Frankenthaler in Provincetown
FREE + OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

SATURDAY, JULY 7 | 3PM
Lecture by John Elderfield:
Helen and High Water
\$15 GENERAL ADMISSION | \$5 FOR MEMBERS

SATURDAY, JULY 14 | 3PM
Lecture by Phyllis Tuchman:
Helen Frankenthaler: From the Heart
\$15 GENERAL ADMISSION | \$5 FOR MEMBERS

TUESDAY, JULY 17 | 6PM
Fredi Schiff Levin Lecture by
Mary Gabriel: Ninth Street Women
*Lee Krasner, Elaine de Kooning, Grace Hartigan,
Joan Mitchell, and Helen Frankenthaler: Five Painters
and the Movement That Changed Modern Art*
\$10 GENERAL ADMISSION | FREE FOR MEMBERS

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
www.PAAM.org

SATURDAY, AUGUST 11 | 3PM
Lecture by Avis Berman:
Voices from the Artist's Archives
\$15 GENERAL ADMISSION | \$5 FOR MEMBERS

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8 | 11AM
Panel Discussion:
Abstract Expressionism in Provincetown
*With Sanford Hirsch, Adolph and Esther Gottlieb
Foundation; Katy Rogers, Dedalus Foundation;
Daniel Belasco, Al Held Foundation.
Moderated by Douglas Dreishpoon,
Helen Frankenthaler Catalogue Raisonné*
\$15 GENERAL ADMISSION | \$5 FOR MEMBERS



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June 15 - July 4:

Michael Mazur

July 6 - 25:

HEAD2HEAD

July 27 - August 2:

Lyle Ashton Harris

August 3 - 16:

Mischa Richter

August 10 - 16:

Esteban del Valle

August 17 - September 5:

Jack Pierson

Becky Kinder

Richard Tinkler

September 7 - 20:

Donna Flax

Richard Baker

James Balla

Daniel Bodner

Paul Bowen

Fritz Bultman

Ann Chernow

Pat de Groot

Sharon Horvath

Cary Leibowitz

Irene Lipton

Duane Slick

Tabitha Vevers

John Waters

Helen Miranda Wilson

Timothy Woodman

Picasso Ceramics

Fine Prints

424 Commercial Street

tel: 508-487-4424 ufoarts@comcast.net

www.albertmerolagallery.com

AMP

ART MARKET PROVINCETOWN

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a live gallery space

EastEnd

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info@artmarketprovincetown.com

Martin R Anderson
Midge Battelle
Cindy Bishop
Terry Boutelle
Deborah Bright
Bobby Busnach
Karen Cappotto
Jamie Casertano
Ted Chapin
Barbara Cohen
Larry Collins
Jay Critchley
Thedra Cullar-Leford
Richard Dorf
Wette Drury Dubinsky
Carol Greenwood
Michelle Handelman
Megan Hinton
Heather Kapplow
John Kelly
M P Laridis
Rene Lamadrid
Jackie Lipton
Susan Lyman
Shelly Mars
Deborah Martin
Zammy Migdal
Bobby Miller
Jeannie Motherwell
Pasquale Natale
Mark Redden
Ellen Rousseau
Nancy Rubens
Sheila Schwid
Ariene Shulman
Judith Trepp
Champa Vaid
Marc Van Cauwenburgh
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Rick Wingley
and others



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drawings

represented by

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Rossetti Fine Arts, Ft. Lauderdale FL

michael-prodanou.com



Nancy Nicol, Artist/Entrepreneur

Burdick Gallery, Wellfleet, MA

Viridian Gallery, Chelsea, NYC

nancynicolart.com



Midge Battelle - New Paintings

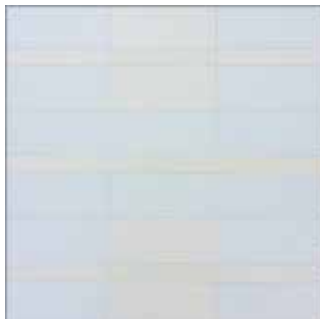
exhibiting July 27-August 8

AMP Gallery, 432 Commercial St, Provincetown

www.artmarketprovincetown.com

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"When I Was a Kid" photo etching 5" x 7"



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"Two Dog Night" photo etching 5" x 7"

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THE CAPE SCHOOL OF ART

In 1899 Charles Hawthorne founded Provincetown's art colony and Cape Cod School of Art, teaching the perception and use of color and light. These principles continue to be taught today at The Cape School of Art.



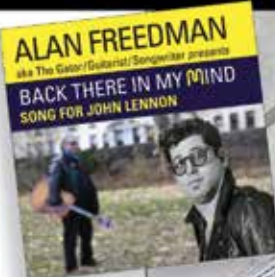
THE CAPE
SCHOOL
OF ART



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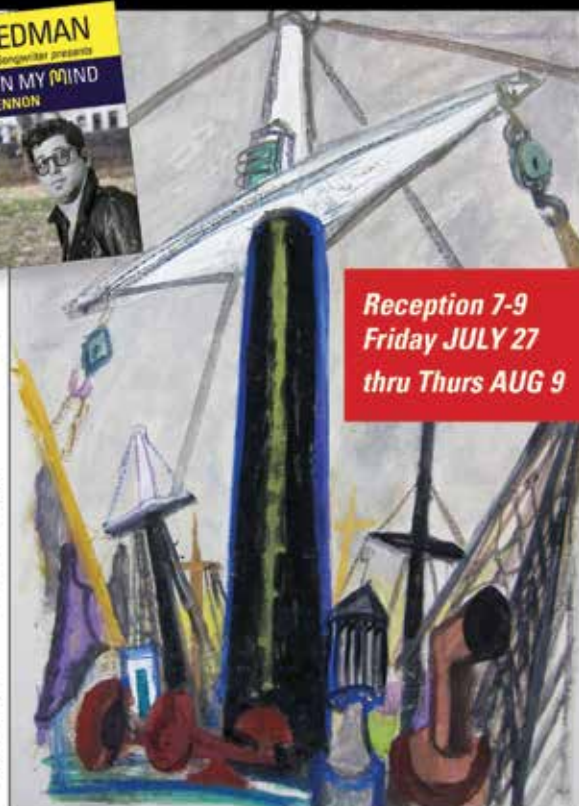
Saluting American Modernist Painter **MAURICE FREEDMAN** and announcing **MUSIC & ART** the world CD release: **ECO-EVOLUTION**



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YouTube

**MAURICE
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"Tall Mast"
early 1950's
Gouache on board
23.5 x 17 inches

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Town landing
on the beach;
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**Reception 7-9
Friday JULY 27
thru Thurs AUG 9**

JULIE HELLER GALLERY

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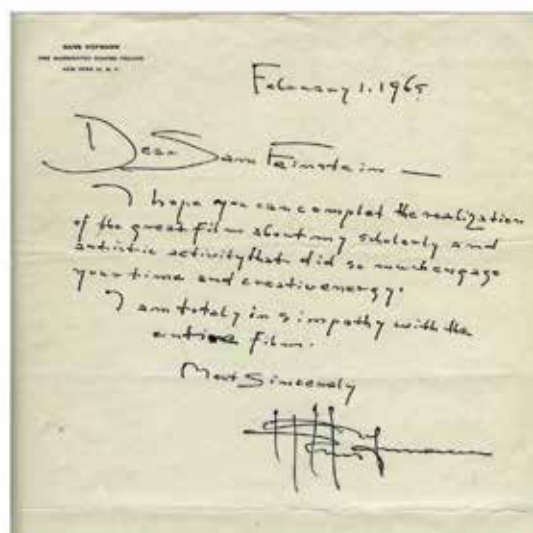
1878 - MAURICE STERNE - 1957
FROM FAMOUS TO FORGOTTEN
June 22 - July 15, 2018



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Knight
Clarke**

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kayknightclarke.com

Summer Storm I, oil on linen, 30 x 20 inches

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P E C K**



adam peck gallery
142 commercial st provincetown adampeckgallery.com 508.274.8298

Ray Wiggs Gallery



"Flying Lesson" by Ray Wiggs 2018 - oil on canvas 36" x 36"

432 Commercial Street, Provincetown, MA 02657
774-593-5143 - www.raywiggsgallery.com - info@raywiggsgallery.com



LAURA SHABOTT



HELEN GRIMM



NAYA BRICHER



LIZ CARNEY



PAUL RIZZO



PETER HOCKING



MADELYN CARNEY



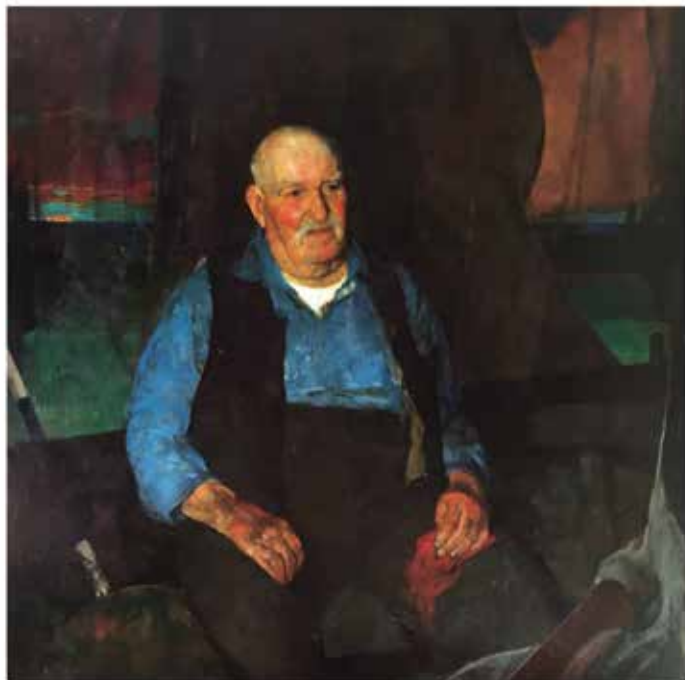
JANINE EVERS

NAYA BRICHER LIZ CARNEY MADELYN CARNEY MATTHEW CAPALDO JANINE EVERS
HELEN GRIMM PETER HOCKING TJASA OWEN PAUL RIZZO LAURA SHABOTT JULIE SMITH

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Charles Webster Hawthorne (1878-1930)



"First Made" 1927 (Portrait of John Atkins Cook)

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VICKY TOMAYKO
A.I.R. Gallery
 Facing Disjunction, Judith Tolnick Champa, curator
 May 24 to June 24, 2018
 155 Plymouth Street, Brooklyn NY



YVETTE DRURY DUBINSKY
 AMP GALLERY, PROVINCETOWN | BRUNO DAVID GALLERY, ST. LOUIS
 A.I.R. GALLERY, NEW YORK - Solo Exhibition: March 15 to April 15, 2019
www.yddstudio.com yvette@yddstudio.com



Lissa Rivera, *Beautiful Boy: Study with Chairs*, Archival Pigment Photograph, 20" x 30"

Lissa Rivera *Beautiful Boy*
 June 27 - July 25
 Clark Gallery at Gallery 444 • 444 Commercial St. Provincetown, MA 02657
www.clarkgallery.com 617-386-6115 dana@clarkgallery.com



CRAIG MATTHEW FREDERICK
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MICHAEL PRODANOU
 paintings
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 Rossetti Fine Arts, Ft. Lauderdale FL
michael-prodanou.com



New paintings:
 August 10 - 23, 2018

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KYLE RINGQUIST GALLERY



The Coast is Green, Acrylic, 30" x 40", 2018

349 Commercial Street, Provincetown, Massachusetts
 508-776-5360 • kyleringquistgallery.com



Jane Paradise Photography

Represented by: Galatea Fine Art - Boston MA

STUDIO: 4 Fortuna Road
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415-321-0382

jane@janeParadise.com

The Dune Shacks of Provincetown Exhibit and Book coming in 2019

T H O M A S A N T O N E L L I



Antonelli Giardelli Gallery
416 Commercial Street Provincetown 508 467 9693

MEGAN HINTON



Acclamation, 2018, oil on panel, 30" x 40"

Exhibiting new paintings and drawings at **AMP Gallery**
opening September 7 to September 26, 2018
432 Commercial Street, Provincetown

Wellfleet Studio by Appointment, tel. 508-332-0518

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Absolute, acrylic on canvas, 48" x 67"

JEANNIE MOTHERWELL - LIMITLESS
AMP Gallery, Provincetown

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Friday, June 27 - Wednesday, August 8

Opening Reception Friday, June 27, 6 - 9pm

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ellensinel@yahoo.com

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Jay McDermott

Southwest Impressions

Date: September 12-19, 2018

Pop up Gallery, 444 Commercial St, Provincetown
jaymcdermott.com, 617-721-7172

Current Exhibition:
June 8 - Aug 17, 2018

STEREO LOVE SEATS HOT WHEELS

AN EXHIBITION FOCUSED ON
THE SEATED OBJECT

Upcoming Exhibition:
Sept 8 - Oct 14, 2018

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Bi-weekly Gallery
openings June 14 – Oct 11
Free and open to the
public from 4 – 6pm

Artist-in-Residence Program at Edgewood Farm

Two weeks to Three Month Residency opportunities
October, November, December and March, April, May

July 28 Full Moon Summer Bash at Edgewood Farm, live music by Chandler Travis Philharmonic, cocktails and delicious food – Free Community Event

Aug 2 BBQ with Smoke Master David Grayson, at the Pamet Yacht Club, includes full dinner, open bar, raw bar and live entertainment – \$200 members, \$225 non-members

Aug 11 Live and Silent Art Auction, at Edgewood Farm, a night of original artwork, live music and cocktails – Entry discounted for members.

Visit our website for our full events calendar!

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Open May - October

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Wishful Thinking

TW 13th Annual Provincetown
Tennessee Williams Theater Festival

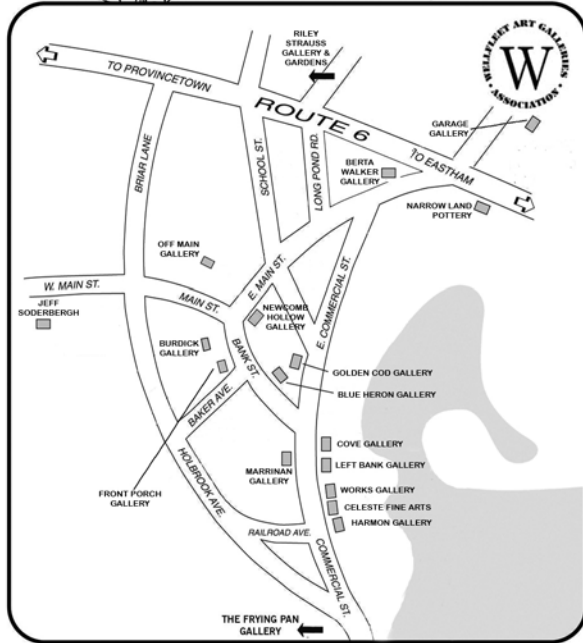
Sept 27-30

tickets & info 866.789.TENN
twptown.org



David Kaplan, Curator | Charlene A. Donaghy, Producer

WELLFLEET
The Art Gallery Town
 "SATURDAY IS GALLERY NIGHT"



Gallery and Restaurant Guide Available
 Stroll through the village and enjoy one of the most
 comprehensive collections of art on Cape Cod.
 Join gallery receptions on Saturday evenings.

KAROL RICHARDSON



CONTEMPORARY WOMEN'S CLOTHING & ACCESSORIES



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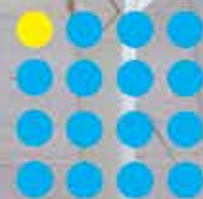
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Helen Frankenthaler, The Human Edge (detail), 1967

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This year, for the first time, we celebrate the achievements of a featured artist who is no longer with us. Helen Frankenthaler passed away in 2011, but she leaves behind an extraordinary legacy, through the foundation that represents her life and work, in her celebrated paintings, in her influence on the art world and the people she touched throughout her life. The five articles in our feature provide a wide range of perspectives, including personal details from the curator of a Frankenthaler exhibition, a feminist view of the artist and her work, accounts of the period she spent in Provincetown, and reminiscences from her stepdaughters, one of whom is herself an artist.

A special feature this year celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the Fine Arts Work Center, a historic institution in Provincetown that gives writers and visual artists a place to hone their craft and create memorable work. Founded in the late 1960s, the Work Center has, against great odds, created and maintained a viable artistic residency program, and its legacy can be seen in the hundreds of Fellows who have created innumerable important works, many award-winning, and have thrived as a result of the trust and support they received.

One Fellowship recipient, our featured writer Paul Lisicky, has clearly achieved the Work Center's goals in his stunning memoirs and fiction, which have garnered international recognition. While the writers of the essays in this feature describe Paul's remarkable gifts as a writer, they equally praise his generosity of spirit as a friend and colleague. Perhaps the subtitle of a recent memoir, *The Narrow Door*, expresses the great significance he places on these relationships: "A Memoir of Friendship." Simply put, Lisicky creates a unique web of friendships and family, a legacy of love, in the pages of his books and in his life.

Other legacies shine in our pages this year, from the story of the Tashas, a prominent family of artists in Provincetown, to Lauren Ewing's creation of the Provincetown AIDS Memorial, a carved monument that re-creates the living ocean and remembers "the lives lost to AIDS and the humanitarian achievements of the caregivers who responded to the crisis." It is also a reminder of this caring community, which welcomes all with its "open minds and big hearts."

Another article celebrates the four-hundredth anniversary of the Pilgrims' landing in Provincetown, one of the most celebrated events in American history and a powerful legacy in the town's heritage. *You Belong Here: Provincetown's Love Affair with Lawlessness and Freedom* talks about the pioneers and rebels who have journeyed to Provincetown, from Pilgrims and pirates to artists and others who seek a community built upon freedom and acceptance.

Legacy is a big word. It lives in monuments and memorialized events, in celebrated artwork and writings and buildings. It is also found in the interstices of history, in the tiny shadows cast off by everyday events and the people and places we all touch and leave behind. It is how we are remembered. It is how we remember those who influenced us. It soaks into the land and living memory and gives a place, a town, its own personality.

I'm reminded of this in an excerpt from Paul Lisicky's upcoming book, *Later*, in which he talks about Provincetown as "Town," as a character with its own spirit:

Town moves on two tracks at once. The time of narrative—in which people want things and lose things—and lyric time, which has nothing to do with the clock. It floats, and it isn't quite attached to Town but it's part of the structure of Town—what draws people here whether they realize it or not. Clock time moves forward but lyric time moves off to the side and stalls there: lateral instead of linear. It is time as enacted in a painting or a poem or a song. It exists outside of human history, and has little to do with people. It was around before people and it will exist long after the people are gone.

We are drawn to these shores, to the people, the generosity, the vital spirit that has built up over the centuries. And our magazine has a place in this continuing story. People often tell me that they save their copies of *Provincetown Arts*, collecting the magazines as an essential history of the town and its artistic community, a history created by a small but devoted staff—Christopher Busa, Irene Lipton, Ingrid Aue, and myself—as well as the thousands of people who share their stories, their art, their writings. We are honored to be a part of this legacy. Something for us to celebrate each year, in a town by the sea built upon a belief in inclusion and belonging.

Susanna Ralli
Senior Editor

ARTISTS

JAY CRITCHLEY's conceptual projects exist in an aesthetic realm that uniquely distinguishes the useful from the useless. He has made himself the CEO of many duly registered corporations, none of which have produced an actual product, except for the now-defunct Old Glory Condom Corporation, which produced prophylactics in stars and stripes. This year, Critchley has targeted the whiteness of the White House with tar and feathers, a deeply poignant image recalling our racist past, when this particular public humiliation was the favored punishment. *The Whiteness House*, a tarred-and-feathered walk-in scale model of the White House, will be activated by collaborative gatherings of artists, performers, and filmmakers.

A devout Irish Catholic, Critchley trained to become a performance artist by serving as an adolescent altar boy during High Mass rituals for Christmas and Easter. He continues to lead his own purification ceremony, the Re-Rooters Day Ceremony, now in its thirty-fifth year, in which he and others celebrate the winter solstice. This year, Critchley summoned thirty people to join him at the edge of a high tide in Provincetown's far East End, where they huddled together like penguins to keep warm, responding to the rhythmic chants led by Critchley. His liturgy rewrites the Ten Commandments, creating neologisms such as "complicit corporate creep," "paper-toweled smallism predation," and "off-shoring fact-indifferent spirit guides." Critchley, absolving us of our sins, adds biblical gravitas to the taint in our secular time.

SALVATORE DEL DEO, still vigorous, celebrates his ninetieth birthday this year, marked by a major retrospective last fall at the Cape Cod Museum of Art. Subtitled *A Storied History* and curated by past director Edith Tonelli, the show told the story of the stages in Del Deo's development as an artist and how he shifted his focus from his influences in Beckmann and Gauguin to a heightened color intensity derived directly from living in the staggering, refracting illumination of our famous Cape light. Del Deo's wife, Josephine, who passed away in 2016, was equally formidable as a poet, writer, art historian, and passionate activist. She protected the National Seashore and authored several books including *Figures in a Landscape: The Life and Times of the American Painter Ross Moffett, 1888–1971*, which details interactions within the circle of founders of the Provincetown art colony, including Charles Hawthorne, Edwin Dickinson, Agnes Weinrich, and Karl Knaths. Del Deo, the only surviving founder of the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, is being honored at FAWC's July 14 Summer Awards celebration and with a summerlong exhibition at the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum. His son, Romolo, now a noted sculptor, is Harvard educated and was extensively trained in Italian bronze-casting foundries. Sal is the patriarch of a new generation,



Jay Critchley and *The Whiteness House*

PHOTO BY ASHLEY CLEMENTS



Yvette Drury Dubinsky, *Visa Problems*

much as Provincetown brings a century-long tradition of sustained vitality through a succession of young artists who, through study and mentorship, come into their own.

YVETTE DRURY DUBINSKY's exhibition at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum—twenty paintings spanning three decades of her work—has a sense of a culminating time line, bringing the artist's personal encounters in her global travels and the evolving issues of migration into sharp contemporary focus. Curated by PAAM director Christine McCarthy in her annual *Director's Choice* exhibition, the show tracks the evolution of Dubinsky's marvelous intersection of form and theme in a diverse selection of media, including drawing, photography, collage, printmaking, and digital manipulation. She often alludes to circles and circularity, maps and mark-making, transforming personal emotion into insights about our historical patterns and shared dilemma. I was struck to learn that the visceral feelings in some of the work was inspired by her experiences when she and her husband bicycled through Eastern Europe and saw firsthand the plight of Syrian refugees: "I saw signs on the road welcoming migrants, but there were crowds of people most unwelcoming. Had I not been to Syria, I would not have been so disturbed, since we personally knew people trying to leave."

JILL KEARNEY writes here about her fledgling center for the arts, ArtYard, located in Frenchtown, New Jersey, and founded by a group of artists, filmmakers, curators, and writers: "P-town was my invisible and constant guide in creating ArtYard. I began rehearsing at age five, drawing museum walls with my index finger in the East End sand flats at low tide and piling moon snails, pipe stems, and rust-encrusted gizmos in imaginary rooms. I loved watching the tide reclaim my museums. Soon, I was attending openings at PAAM and 'be-ins' where my father and Norman Mailer held a funeral for Ernest Hemingway's Citroën. At a certain point in my life, I realized that there was no community without art institutions. There is no town without a gathering place devoted to creativity and ideas that have nothing to do with commerce. And, strangely, despite all the evidence to the contrary, I am convinced that art is only vaguely related to commerce, or at least that's how Provincetown raised me. It gave me enormous pleasure to invite Schoolhouse Gallery's Mike Carroll to curate a show for Kahn & Selesnick, artists I have been following for years in Provincetown. Having them all here in Frenchtown was like bringing two lenses of a binocular into focus in one frame. An enormous crowd appeared, including the mail lady and the local carpenters and poets, in front of their mesmerizing, funny heartbreaking work."

JUDY PFAFF is offering a workshop for advanced painters, titled *Thinking, Working, Space*, this July at the Truro Center for the



Salvatore Del Deo exhibit at the Cape Cod Museum of Art

PHOTO BY GRACE HOPKINS



Kahn & Selesnick installation at ArtYard

PHOTO BY PAUL WARCHOL



Judy Pfaff, *Tisbury (A Romance)*, 2017

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Arts at Castle Hill; also in July, Gaa Gallery in Wellfleet will present a solo show of her work that will include an installation of larger-scale pieces on the gallery's upper level.

JOHN WATERS, Provincetown's high priest of bad taste, must have read St. Augustine's *Confessions*, in which the saintly voice reflects on the positive benefits of his misspent youth: "God judged it better to bring good out of evil than to suffer no evil to exist." This commingling of antagonistic forces may be the fundamental inspiration for Waters's rabble-rousing art, which absorbs evil into the fuller context of human affairs. Since the 1960s, he has been making wickedly funny fun of woefully wicked people in subversive films such as *Pink Flamingos* and *Hairspray*. In recent years, Waters has retreated from cinematic storytelling to take on ironies in the art world, curating in 2011 a show at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis titled "Absentee Landlord." He selected nearly eighty disparate artworks, by artists ranging from Russ Meyers to Willem de Kooning, as "roommates" who don't get along, writing in an introduction, "I want to clean house, reward troublemakers, and invite crashers." This fall, the Baltimore Museum of Art is hosting *John Waters: Indecent Exposure*, a major retrospective of more than 160 photographs, sculptures, and video and sound pieces, including stills from his films.

AI WEIWEI—a Chinese artist and activist known internationally for his get-under-the-skin, politically relevant artwork, including sculpture, photography, and film—has work on display this summer at the Hudson D. Walker Gallery at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown. This solo exhibition, *Ai Weiwei: Rebar and Case*, is in collaboration with Chambers Fine Art in New York, which first showed this exhibition in 2014. The eight sculptures owe their origin to the 8.0 magnitude earthquake that struck the Sichuan province of China in 2008. Ai purchased two hundred tons of rebar salvaged from the wreckage of buildings, which he's used since in various installation projects; in the current exhibition, twisted dark cords of iron painted a blazing white become like the scattered bones of skeletons, enclosed in beautifully designed and polished Huali wood coffins, as if the five thousand schoolchildren who died in the earthquake were now interred with the dignity they deserve. The hushed reverence of this visual evocation honors the names of the dead, which the government refused to disclose. The Work Center will also be honoring Ai with a Distinguished Artistic Achievement award at its annual Summer Awards Celebration at the Pilgrim Monument and Museum.



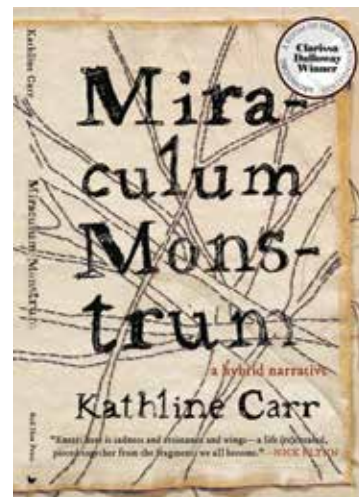
Ai Weiwei, 2012

AI WEIWEI STUDIO



WRITERS

KATHLINE CARR, author of *Miraculum Monstrum: A Hybrid Narrative* (Red Hen Press, 2017), winner of the Clarissa Dalloway Book Prize, has combined her talents in art and writing to produce a book that reflects the intricate dialogue between the left and right hemispheres of the brain. A collection of texts and images, including poems, stories, drawings, paintings, and mixed-media pieces, tells the story of a woman who turns into a bird, with apocryphal and religious overtones, and wordplay that is poetic and delicious in its D. H. Lawrence-like details, so innocently revealing the sexuality of birds, beasts, and flowers. Carr writes, "Eating plums // juice on chin, throat, between breasts— / . . . the hummingbirds / hovering their soft bodies / at the wisteria, prodding // flowers with their protruding beaks." From poet Nick Flynn's review: "Enter: here is sadness and resistance and wings—a life (re) created, pieced together from the fragments we all become."



KELLE GROOM, this year's poetry editor (see page 135), is author of a new book, *Spill* (Anhinga Press, 2017). Here, John Bonanni, editor of the *Cape Cod Poetry Review*, offers a capsule review: "In Groom's latest collection, she offers us speakers who are at once composed and disjointed, navigating complex spheres of love. Narrative, logically sequenced poems, like 'May Day,' a love poem for Larry Levis, balance against highly caesuraed poems, broken across the landscape of her page. We see these broken forms in poems like 'The Great Nebula of Orion' where the speaker observes a fisherman pull a shark out of the ocean: 'Does the shark let the boy reach inside,' the speaker questions. This motif of the tidal and oceanic threads through the collection, which begs the reader to ask: What does it mean to spill? Groom's book, then, functions as the collective arguments of a spilled heart, in which this poet's careful attention to language pays tribute to our many pourings, no matter how messy."

PHILIP HOARE, author of seven wildly divergent books of nonfiction, this spring published a remarkable integration of wildly divergent material, *Rising Tide Falling Star: In Search of the Soul of the Sea* (University of Chicago Press, 2018). The protean power of water is enhanced by the passivity of its molecules, which easily expand into mist, condense into ice, or flow in currents and waves. Hoare's daily immersion in warm or cold waters around the world, including his seaside residences in Southampton, England, and Provincetown, Cape Cod, cleanse his body of any affliction that his vast erudition might suggest. He swims with whales, he swims in the majesty of Melville's prose and Shakespeare's poetry, sharing details about scenes in *Moby-Dick* and *The Tempest* that animate his poetry with the authenticity of fully absorbed experience. Hoare writes, "One magical moment; I feel like a penitent. The sea is so still it seems like a sin to break its surface. But I do. Swimming at night, with diminished sense of sight, only makes the act all the more sensual. You feel the water

around you; you lose yourself in its sway. Fish bite me, leaving loving grazes.” Readers will also feel connected to Hoare in his presence as a Provincetown neighbor and friend of our own celebrated naturalists, including Pat de Groot, Dennis Minsky, and scientists such as Charles “Stormy” Mayo at Provincetown’s Center for Coastal Studies, world renowned for its research on marine mammals. John Waters, who introduced Hoare to Provincetown, knows that waters may have a powerful effect on the psyche, which is why his blurb for Hoare’s book is so paradoxically accurate: “*Rising Tide Falling Star* is so well written, so impassioned, so aqua-obsessed that after reading it you may actually want to drown.”

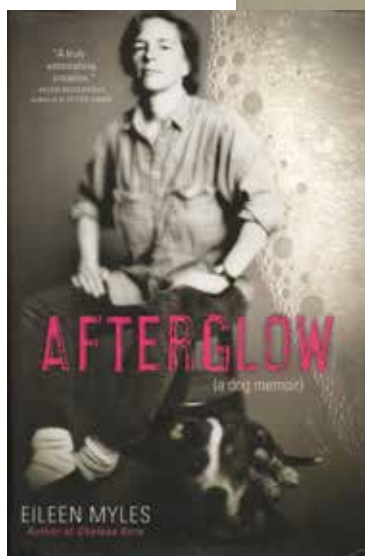
MAGGIE MCKINLEY, author of *Understanding Norman Mailer* (University of South Carolina Press, 2017), is the newly elected president of the Norman Mailer Society, founded in the last years of Mailer’s life, under the leadership of J. Michael Lennon, author of the acclaimed authorized biography *Norman Mailer: A Double Life*. Now that the scholars and critics who knew Mailer are passing from the scene, a new group has come forward with McKinley in the forefront, publishing many articles in the closely affiliated *Mailer Review*. Of McKinley’s new book, Lennon



PHOTO BY GERALD LUCAS

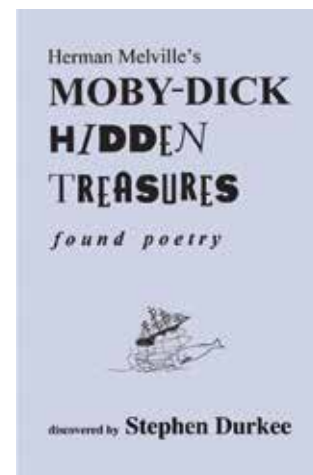
said: “McKinley’s incisive, fair-minded examination of the cornucopia of preoccupations in Mailer’s work over six decades, including the essay, biography, nonfiction narrative, and novel, is the first to look at all his major work, as well as his accomplishments as a public intellectual and filmmaker. It is also one of the best, an essential volume.” McKinley was vice president of the society prior to her new appointment and is the department chair at Harper College in Chicago.

EILEEN MYLES, poet, novelist, and commentator on contemporary art, was featured on the cover of *Provincetown Arts* in the year 2000, at a time when she was more famous underground, like a subversive literary subway car tunneling under the mainstream traffic thundering above on the streets of Manhattan. Her insouciant voice, with eccentric liberties in syntax, following a style guide derived from her personal aesthetic, has found a mainstream audience with numerous national appearances and recognitions at the highest level—last year the *New York Review of Books* praised her as a belated brother of Allen Ginsberg. Now comes her newest book, *Afterglow (a dog memoir)* (Grove Atlantic Press, 2017), a genre-breaking book with the plain, wide-eyed enchantment of a classic fairy tale. Myles animates her beloved pit bull, Rosie, with the uncanny articulate voice of those who loved the dog, such as the author’s own father, who played with the dog while he was alive. The animal’s death does not stop its speech, and Myles is like a ventriloquist: when Rosie digs deep holes in the earth, Myles uses the metaphor “fills with life”; when

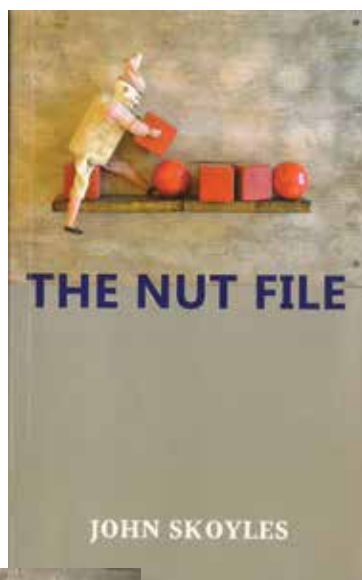


Myles remarks on the power of her medium, she says, “To write a book is to dig a hole in eternity.”

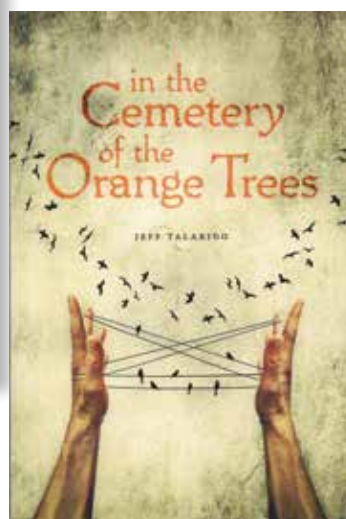
ROSALIND PACE, awarded a fellowship in poetry in 2016 from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, was the prime mover in fostering the publication of *Herman Melville’s Moby-Dick Hidden Treasures: Found Poetry* by Stephen Durkee (Provincetown Arts Press, Poets Series Vol. XI, 2016). Durkee’s stanzas make Ahab speak with thunder in his voice: “How can the prisoner reach outside / except by thrusting through the wall? / To me, the white whale is that wall, / shoved near to me.” Durkee passed away just as the book was being printed. He stipulated that the limited first edition be given to local libraries and collections. *Herman Melville’s Moby-Dick* received an Honorable Mention in Poetry at the 2017 New England Book Festival. A second edition is planned.



JOHN SKOYLES is the author of six collections of poetry and four wryly written works of nonfiction, including most recently *The Nut File* (Quale Press, 2017). The book cover features Varujan Boghosian’s 2008 *Removing Red (Portrait of the Artist)*, featuring an untethered marionette, the title implying that the artist is removing one element of his creation. A master of modern collage, Boghosian, along with Joseph Cornell and Robert Motherwell, praised the collage as the most significant form of art in the twentieth century, the only medium with the power to include the cacophony, confusion, and clatter of contemporary life, so that the disjunctive can find resolution via juxtaposition. Skoyles’s writing in *Nut File* is a collage of fiction and nonfiction, original and appropriated materials, tidbits and voices that collected in his unconscious over the many years since his time at the Associated Press office, where he worked in his twenties. Skoyles’s book shows how memory jumps across our lengthening years, offering belated wisdom; his aphoristic, epigrammatic tidbits jostle with each other, finding surprisingly happy kinship. For the reader’s understanding of the book’s chronological structure, the author advises, “A life has a beginning, a middle and an end, but not necessarily in that order.”



JEFF TALARIGO, based in Boston, lives elsewhere in his imagination. His third novel, *In the Cemetery of the Orange Trees* (Etruscan Press, 2018), delves deeper into his uncanny relationship with the *otherness* found in the cultures of foreign countries—his earlier novels examined the cultures of China, North Korea, and Japan; his new collage novel focuses on the diaspora of refugees in constant struggle in Palestine. Talarigo’s parabolic language achieves a shocking explosion of guilt by making several characters into articulate animals—much in the



manner of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, in which mice impersonate concentration camp victims, curiously offering human intimacy into the daily lives of victims. Living for seven months in Gaza, Talarigo absorbed details about the culture and let the locals tell their stories. He saw little boys at the Jabaliya refugee camp (with over 130,000 refugees) tie a few yards of string to the neck of an injured bird, letting it fly free, only to be jerked back by a yank on the string. He gained the confidence of local people when a refugee barber offered to shave his beard with a straightedge razor, and a small crowd gathered for an unintended show of trust. He advises, "When you go to a place to write about, go alone, always go alone and see with your eyes."

JOYCE VICTOR, an experienced registered nurse who possesses a PhD in Nursing, has written an account of her own near-death experience as well as the deaths of hospital patients in her care, *You're Not Dead 'til I Say You're Dead* (Northampton House Press, 2018). We learn that nurses, during training, practice on their classmates before they qualify to treat others. Victor's almost daily encounters with end-of-life profundities offers revelations for those of us who are only vaguely mindful that the cessation of life is the cessation of sensation, and that, while we are living, we are also in the process of dying. "As I began examining my attitudes toward death and dying," Victor writes, "I would be doing something and suddenly have a thought that appeared to have no correlation at all to what I was doing. I wondered if I could somehow slow down the thought process and follow the path of a memory through my brain." Here, Victor discovered the context-limiting power of trauma, in which the dying, and those observing the dying, find their concentration constricted, eliminating all sense of connected emotions. Before meeting the family of a deceased man, Victor reminded herself that she had taken this job to get more experience: "I reviewed the rules I had learned. *State the death as fact. Keep it simple. Stay calm. Don't cry.* I swallowed hard and took a deep breath. Then I turned back to Mr. Healey's family and waved toward a small conference room. 'Why don't the two of you join me in here.'"

JOSHUA WEINER, the new chair of FAWC's Writing Committee, lives in Washington, DC, where he is privy to the nuances of political thought and has written a chapbook of poems that expose the ludicrous logic and absurd conclusions of the president's public utterances. Here are a few lines from *Everything I Do I Do Good: TrumPoems* (A Dispatches Virtual Chapbook, 2018), which may be read in its entirety at dispatchespoetrywars.com/dispatches-news/2018/03/everything-good-trumpoems-joshua-weiner-2/:

When I do good speeches people cheer,
even bad ones, they stand up and clap
they're so good. Good, by the way, is close
to God, it's just one letter away.

JACQUELINE WOODSON lived in Provincetown for four years, following her Fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center in 1990. *Brown Girl Dreaming* (Penguin, 2014), her compelling memoir-in-verse,



Joyce Victor

PHOTO BY NICK DUBINSKI



David Drake

PHOTO BY JOSÉ VILLARRUBIA



Joshua Weiner



Jacqueline Woodson with a fan

won the National Book Award for Young People's Literature, and was reviewed in *Provincetown Arts* by Cecilia Galante, herself an acclaimed writer of young adult fiction. In a world "previously dominated by books about boy wizards and fighting teenagers," Woodson found a voice for a subtly innocent questioning about growing up, racism, and learning to read, through the lens of childhood where the truth slowly becomes visible. Woodson told us that her time in Provincetown "was a life-altering experience. Aside from meeting people who remain close friends to this day, I was able to leap into writing full-time against a background of amazing talent. I had never spent any time in Provincetown, but once I was able to center myself and begin to understand that it was where I was supposed to be at that moment in my life, I grew in ways I never would have imagined." This year, the Library of Congress, the Children's Book Council, and Every Child a Reader named Woodson as the new National Ambassador for Young People's Literature.

THEATER

With the leadership of new artistic director **DAVID DRAKE**, the Provincetown Theater plans to offer productions appealing to visitors that come here to rejuvenate—and specifically the LGBTQ population, with at least one LGBTQ-themed play—from May to September. The theater's full-scale productions of plays and musicals will be a distinct contrast from the downtown cabaret-style entertainment, providing a compelling reason to attend performances. In the off-season, it will continue to include reimaged American classics. The theater also plans to take more risks to create intimate town-friendly events that promote a lively year-round community space. Its first performance of the 2018 season was *You Can't Take It with You*.

DAVID KAPLAN, curator for the annual Tennessee Williams Theater Festival in Provincetown, has, season by season, offered eager and alert audiences a uniquely direct education in how only live theater can offer a shared communal catharsis. I discussed with Kaplan how, in the cleansing of fleeting emotions, there is a discovery of deeper feeling. "This is because theater began in religion," Kaplan told me after last year's season, making revelatory links in staging plays by Williams, William Shakespeare, and Eugene O'Neill. "That's not my idea. To establish a temple, you draw a line, and on one side of the line is sacred space, where the altar is located. Everything placed on the altar—an eggshell, a beaker of wine, a piece of bread—becomes irradiated with significance. And the actions of those who place the items on the altar, in a religious ceremony, relate to the outer space where the audience observes. The same thing happens in live theater." Throughout the year, Kaplan produces plays in a variety of countries. In Russia, directing Williams's *Suddenly Last Summer*, Kaplan was asked if a Russian audience would grasp that the play was about homosexuality. "Well," Kaplan said, "Tennessee Williams uses homosexuality as a metaphor for a truth everybody knows, but no one will admit to knowing. I think a Russian audience will understand that."

For more information about theater on the Lower Cape, check out the websites for the **PAYOMET PERFORMING ARTS** (payomet.org) and the **WELL-FLEET HARBOR ACTORS THEATER** (what.org).



Oysters & Opera for **PROVINCETOWN ARTS** *Come & Celebrate!*

Please join us on **Tuesday, August 7**, from 6 to 8:30 p.m., for an unforgettable cocktail party on the grounds of one of Truro's most storied homes, with food by Angel Foods, a raw bar by the Wellfleet Bay Oyster Company, some of the country's top opera singers presented by the New York Opera Society, and the opportunity to celebrate our 2018 cover subjects,

Helen Frankenthaler & Paul Lisicky.

Tickets are \$125, and sales will be limited to 100 guests.

All proceeds go directly to the nonprofit Provincetown Arts Press.

This unique event has sold out every year. You won't want to miss it.

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Helen Frankenthaler

In the pantheon of revered artists that constitutes

the essential canon of Provincetown's unique contribution to art history in America, the name Helen Frankenthaler (1928–2011) feels more distant, locally, than it deserves to be. Our focus on Frankenthaler in this issue explores the artist's continuing inspiration for contemporary artists: Angela Dufresne's passionate examination-by-alert-eye of Frankenthaler's painting *Holocaust*, about which she spoke spontaneously into Jennifer Liese's tape recorder while facing the work in situ at the Art Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design; Bonnie Clearwater's account of her experience working with Frankenthaler to select a survey exhibition of works on paper for the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, Florida; and Mira Schor's interpretation of the political, sexual, and competitive issues that Frankenthaler faced as a woman navigating the male-dominated world of the Abstract Expressionists. Finally, we show the ongoing influence of the artist's work in a profile on Jeannie Motherwell, Frankenthaler's stepdaughter and Robert Motherwell's daughter, in whose work the family and artistic legacy continues.

Abstract Climates: Helen Frankenthaler in Provincetown, the exhibition on view at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum from July 6 through September 2, is devoted to works done by Frankenthaler during more than a decade of summers she spent living and working in Provincetown after her marriage to Robert Motherwell in 1958. Lise Motherwell, a stepdaughter of the artist and President of PAAM, curated the show with Elizabeth Smith, Executive Director of the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation in New York. It is one of the largest exhibitions in PAAM's history and makes vivid the visceral impact of Provincetown on the artist's work and person, including as it does many photographs of this legendary art-world couple at work and at play.

Earlier this year, Douglas Dreishpoon, Director of the Helen Frankenthaler Catalogue Raisonné, moderated a closed roundtable discussion at the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation that focused on the dynamic artistic relationship between Frankenthaler and Motherwell. Excerpts from this conversation follow.

— CB

(facing page) Helen Frankenthaler in her Provincetown studio "in the woods," summer 1968; *Summer Banner*, 1968 (upside down), is in the background; Frankenthaler is holding *Spices*, 1968; and in the foreground is *Summer Core*, 1968.

COURTESY OF THE GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, LOS ANGELES; PHOTO BY ALEXANDER LIBERMAN

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Helen Frankenthaler's Provincetown Years

A Roundtable Discussion Featuring Douglas Dreishpoon, Jack Flam, Lise Motherwell, Katy Rogers, Clifford Ross, and Elizabeth Smith

When the artists Helen Frankenthaler and Robert Motherwell married in New York City on April 6, 1958, Motherwell had been summering on Cape Cod for the past few years. He felt at home on the Cape, with its Mediterranean light and laid-back lifestyle, far removed from the bustling canyons of Manhattan. It's not surprising that he would want to share such a special place with his bride, who had previously walked the narrow streets of this Portuguese fishing town during the three-week stint she studied with Hans Hofmann in the summer of 1950. Nine years later, after spending their honeymoon summer of 1958 in Europe, she and Motherwell began spending their summers together on the Cape, initially in Falmouth, where they rented a summerhouse, and then in Provincetown, where, from 1960 to 1969, they spent some of the most productive times of their lives. During their first few years there, they set up studios, one above the other, in a rustic barn at Days Lumberyard. By 1964, both were painting in studios overlooking the bay at their newly constructed "Sea Barn" at 631 Commercial Street. In 1967, Frankenthaler moved again, this time to a studio in the woods, among the dunes, still close to the water.

Being an art-world couple, both painters shared friends, personal challenges, and aesthetic insights. Visits to each other's studio, to talk about work in progress, were no doubt part of an ongoing exchange. As to what was said at any given time, we may never know. What's apparent, though, looking at the paintings they produced during their thirteen years together, are the unmistakable affinities, the fruits of which have yet to be properly parsed out. With this objective in mind, a closed-session roundtable was convened at the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation on February 8, 2018. The participants included John Elderfield, Jack Flam, Lise Motherwell, Katy Rogers, Clifford Ross, Elizabeth Smith, and myself, though not everyone is quoted in the excerpts that follow. Working from a prepared outline of topics and questions, and constantly referring to slides of both artists' paintings, we discussed the subtle shadings of this artistic relationship. Those parts of the transcript germane to Provincetown are published here, edited and augmented where appropriate. The session reinforced our belief that the pictorial dimensions of this symbiotic relationship would make for an illuminating exhibition.

— DD



Frankenthaler and Robert Motherwell at their Days Lumberyard studios, Provincetown, Massachusetts, summer 1961
COURTESY CENTER FOR CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY, UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA © 1991 HANS NAMUTH ESTATE

DOUGLAS DREISHPOON: Our conversation about Helen and Bob brings us to the Cape, where many artists went for the summer to unwind. Compared to Long Island, the Cape was a different kind of place. I think about a painter during the 1960s, fleeing the mean streets of New York City for Provincetown Harbor, and what happens to one's consciousness with that shift of location. How long does it take to settle into another groove in a different locale? And how does location affect what you do as an artist? The Cape enabled a lot of socializing, visits and ongoing conversations, as the work got done. There were different schedules, too. Motherwell was nocturnal; Frankenthaler was more of a morning person. So the balancing of diurnal cycles is something else to consider.

LISE MOTHERWELL: The question about socializing is complicated. Helen writes about it and my father talked about taking a break from all the socializing in New York, not having a phone for many years, and people only being able to contact them by telegram or letter. There were certainly, on occasion, dinner parties and cocktail parties. A lot of the people they socialized with were from New York, not from Provincetown. Helen probably thought Provincetown was provincial, not intellectually stimulating enough, given the kind of social echelon she was used to. It wasn't until she started to meet some of the people in town that she started to talk about Provincetown as a place she could connect with. So it's unclear how much socializing was actually happening. But, certainly, I think they both protected their time. There was a rule in

the house. If somebody was in town visiting, Helen would say to them, “See you at seven thirty for dinner.” The message was, you’re on your own until seven thirty, which gave her time to paint. Dad would go to the studio after dinner and stay up until two or three in the morning. They both guarded those times. The only time we kids had to be home was at one o’clock, for lunch, when they’d both be there and available.

DD: Was there swimming as well? Was swimming part of the daily ritual?

LM: Oh, there was lots of swimming. I remember Helen teaching us how to swim. She used to take us not only to the beach in front of the house, but also to the ponds in Wellfleet, where we got professional lessons—so-called professional lessons. She swam twice a day in front of the house and was always a very strong swimmer. My father was not a good swimmer, so he didn’t swim much. In fact, we always wondered if he was going to make it. [laughter] We always hoped that the boat they owned wouldn’t sink. He always got boats that couldn’t sink. I thought that was a good plan.

ELIZABETH SMITH: We’ve uncovered something interesting in our research for the show at PAAM [the Provincetown Art Association and Museum] on Helen’s Provincetown work. There are a number of paintings based on banner-like imagery—hanging flags and banners Helen may have seen on Commercial Street and on the boats.

LM: Dad was a Francophile. So was Helen. The French and Italian flags are banner flags, simple and uncomplicated. My father wanted to hang the French flag in Provincetown, and did, above the American flag, I believe, until someone told him that it was illegal and he needed to switch them, with the American flag on top. So he took the French flag down and kept the American flag up. I never thought of my father as being



Summer Insignia, 1969, acrylic on canvas, 95 by 85¼ inches
PRIVATE COLLECTION

PHOTOGRAPH © 2011 CHRISTIE'S IMAGES LIMITED

very political. He always told us that his paintings were not political. But how can you paint a series of 170 paintings called *Elegy to the Spanish Republic* and not be politically inclined? Still, he insisted that his paintings were apolitical. And yet he flew the American flag in Provincetown every summer. It hung outside the house all the time, flapping in the wind. The neighbors would go crazy because it made so much noise. There’s

a photograph of the flag being put outside the window for the Fourth of July. Now it seems so patriotic in a way that I don’t equate with either one of them. There was also the Portuguese Festival and the Blessing of the Fleet, rituals that he connected with, as did Helen. The banners were potent symbols.

ES: And they were symbols that captivated their visual imaginations. In Helen’s case, there are a number of paintings—*Summer Banner* (1968), *Summer Insignia* and *Hurricane Flag* (both 1969)—titled after flags. She often titled things after the fact, particularly when there was a visual reference. It points to the environment of Provincetown as a tangible, generative influence.

LM: Provincetown, even with all the AbEx people who came to study with Hofmann or who had been through Hofmann’s studio school, was very laid back. Compared to the Hamptons, it was completely low key. That’s what my father loved about it. It also had a history for him. He was married to my mother, Betty Little, there. He also married Maria Ferreira y Moyers there and he married Renate Ponsold in Wellfleet.

JACK FLAM: With the exception of Helen, he married each of his wives on the Cape.



Jeannie and Lise Motherwell’s lemonade stand, Frankenthaler second from right, 622 Commercial Street, Provincetown, Massachusetts, July 4, 1963 COURTESY OF THE DEDALUS FOUNDATION



PHOTOS BY BILL RIDENHOUR

Frankenthaler in her studio "in the woods," Provincetown, Massachusetts, summer 1969

LM: Exactly. As I mentioned before, being in Provincetown was probably a hard shift for Helen, coming from a very social New York world, where she knew everybody, and then suddenly moving to this fairly remote place. I'm sure Dad tried to convince her. "Oh," he might have said, "this is a place where we can be quiet, where we can actually get some work done without all the background noise of New York." I'm sure Helen found the idea appealing. But I'm pretty sure it was hard for her once she got there. That's probably why she invited friends and associates from New York to come and to hang out with them. When I look at all the work she did in Provincetown—not just what's in the show at PAAM, but all the paintings she did during these years—there's a phenomenal amount of good work. I read recently that after one particular summer—it may have been the summer she painted in the studio in the woods—they couldn't fit some of the paintings into André Emmerich's gallery that fall.

ES: That's true. The canvases were too large.

LM: Knowing this makes me feel a little better, because we couldn't get some of the same works into PAAM either—for the same reason. Making paintings that large, knowing they would be a challenge for anyone acquiring one, took a lot of

courage. She eventually acclimated to Provincetown's culture, found a way to work there and to feel more at home by creating some kind of social life. It wasn't East Hampton; there wasn't a dinner party every night. Back then, there was little to do in Provincetown except your work. It really forced you to connect with your work and with the people around you, your family and close friends.

DD: What else about Provincetown fueled their creativity?

JF: The light. And, also, Bob used to refer to Provincetown as being very European. In a way, it is; in a way, it's not. But what he was referring to was not only the radiant luster of the light, but a certain manner of living that was not quite as high-stressed as American life often is, especially in New York and vicinity. In 1978, Motherwell compared the light in Provincetown to that in the Greek islands, because, he said, "Like them, Provincetown is on a narrow spit of land surrounded by the sea, which reflects light with a diffused brilliance that is subtly but crucially different from the dry, inland light of Tuscany, the Madrid plateau, Arizona, or

the Sierra Madres in Mexico, where the glittering light is not suffused, but crystal clear." Also, he loved to get suntanned. I remember, actually, at the end of one summer, he came back and he was really tan. I said, "You look great." He said, "Anybody looks great with a suntan." [laughter]

LM: He was a Californian who loved to drive.



PHOTO BY DAVID SMITH

Robert Motherwell and Frankenthaler in Fiat "Jolly" in front of their home, 622 Commercial Street, Provincetown, Massachusetts, August 1962

He always had a convertible and loved to drive with the top down, getting a tan. Provincetown was inexpensive then. Artists could afford to go there and to spend many months. During the sixties, many artists, writers, and professors took their families to the Cape and stayed for the whole summer. That doesn't happen much anymore; it's too expensive to stay for a full three months. Now people rent out their houses or go for only a week or two. It's a completely different proposition, in terms of getting into the rhythm of the place. If you're able to spend two or three months, you really have time to settle in, literally, and experience the many holidays and rituals—the Portuguese Festival and Blessing of the Fleet, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, the Business Guild Carnival and Parade—something you can't do if you're there for just one week. They had that opportunity.

With Helen's work, you have to talk about the environment, because it is so extraordinary. The color of the water changes depending on the sky. If the sky is blue, the water is a deep Mediterranean blue. If the sky is gray, so is the water. At low tide, you can see eelgrass and sandbars. A painting like *The Bay* (1963) reflects this. So do *Head of the Meadow* (1967) and *Hurricane Flag*. I don't even know what a hurricane flag looks like, what the colors are on it. I know that it hangs in Provincetown when there's a hurricane coming, and I can imagine Helen seeing it flapping around, with its swaths of color, and holding onto the image. In Provincetown, you can see the moon and the sun simultaneously coming up



The Bay, 1963, acrylic on canvas, 80 3/4 by 82 1/8 inches

DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS, MICHIGAN; FOUNDERS SOCIETY PURCHASE, DR. AND MRS. HILBERT H. DELAWTER FUND

PHOTO BY MIKE@MIKESTUDIO.ORG, COURTESY OF TURNER CONTEMPORARY, MARGATE, KENT, UK



The Human Edge, 1967, acrylic on canvas, 124 by 93 1/4 inches

EVERSON MUSEUM OF ART, SYRACUSE, NY; PURCHASED TO HONOR MAX W. SULLIVAN, DIRECTOR, ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF THE NEW BUILDING, PC 68.23; COURTESY OF THE COLLECTION OF THE EVERSON MUSEUM OF ART, SYRACUSE, NY

over the horizon, which you can't in most places on the East Coast, because the sun sets in the west. There are extraordinarily beautiful phenomena, sights she may have internalized and reimagined. Then I think about my Dad's *Beside the Sea* series (1962) and the waves crashing against the breakers, all that motion and freedom. That's what summertime was about—being free.

CLIFFORD ROSS: Besides nature and life in Provincetown inspiring a looser and freer attitude for Helen and Bob, I think the security and thrill of their marriage during this period enabled them to explore new directions in their work—and to easily absorb influences from each other. If Helen's long suit was Dionysian abandon, Bob's might be seen as Apollonian, with a sure eye for structure. There's no doubt that Bob's *Beside the Sea* series leapt from the ocean outside their studios, but the *Lyric Suite* (1965), with its plumes of ink stained into paper, as well as the gestural passages in paintings like *Black and White* (1961) and *The Voyage: Ten Years After* (1960–1961/1962), make it impossible not to see Helen's impact. On the flip side, would Helen have painted *Swan Lake I* (1961) or *The Human Edge* (1967) without having been around Bob's paintings—and Bob? There are moments of poignant synergy. Summertime, landscape, and a relationship that fostered experimentation did a lot for both of them.

DD: If we're talking about their work, spontaneous process versus formal structure and how these played out between them, to my eyes, the bands in the bottom vector of the *Beside the Sea* series could refer to piers or breakwaters or to the ocean itself. As formal elements, similar bands begin to appear in Helen's work but in different and interesting ways. She seems to grab the idea and to develop it in her own way. She keys in on that part of the image, the nestling up of horizontals—perhaps personifying Provincetown—and carries these forward in a sequence of related works. Sometimes



Indian Summer, 1967, acrylic on canvas, 93½ by 93⅞ inches

HIRSHHORN MUSEUM AND SCULPTURE GARDEN, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, DC; GIFT OF JOSEPH H. HIRSHHORN, 1972

PHOTO BY CATHY CARVER, COURTESY OF THE HIRSHHORN MUSEUM AND SCULPTURE GARDEN, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, DC

he'd come back after Labor Day, I'd usually spend a few days seeing what he'd done and catching up. I was always impressed by what he brought back. Many of the works had a Provincetown feel to them, not only the blue paintings. So many of those paintings had a radiant tranquility.

KATY ROGERS: He talks about that, too, that you can tell the difference between a Greenwich painting and a Provincetown painting by the colors he used and the feel of them. In the late 1970s, he wrote, "In Provincetown, in summer the sunlit colors—cobalt and ultramarine blues, unmixed orange, white, purple, black shadows—plus a certain joy creeps into my works, just as, in winter, it becomes more somber, brutal, and atavistic." So it was definitely something he was cognizant of and working with. That tension between the darker and the lighter works, speaking both compositionally and emotionally, was central to his working process. His summer and winter works were separate but always in dialogue.

LM: Did he always say where something was painted? Or did you have to glean that from the titles? Because that's one of the things we struggled with as we chose the show for PAAM. Certain titles offered us clues as to where and when something was painted, but it wasn't always clear. And then there were others where it was obvious that they had been painted in Provincetown.

there are two bands, sometimes more. The number of bands is interesting to note. Who knows how artistic minds process what they see and then reenvision it. The reciprocity between Motherwell's *Beside the Sea* series and a painting like *Untitled* (1966), and Frankenthaler's *Buddha's Court* (1964), *Indian Summer*, *The Human Edge*, and *Flood* (all 1967), is a fascinating study of artistic affinity and formal transformation.

LM: The influence of Provincetown for my father may well have been the view through his studio windows and doors, awash with color and light. What always surprised me about Helen was that she could paint anywhere—in the woods, near the sea, even in a basement. She held recollections of places and things in her memory and body, as she said, "in her arms." In Provincetown, except for his studio at Days Lumberyard, my father always painted near the water, looking through windows and doors.

JF: I remember during the eighties, when your father came back from Provincetown with a lot of work that had a Mediterranean feel. Paintings such as *Gulfstream* (1980) and the earlier *Summer Open with Mediterranean Blue* (1974) are some of the most beautiful of the blue *Opens*. I was summering in Greenwich then, and when



Flood, 1967, acrylic on canvas, 124¼ by 140½ inches

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, NEW YORK. PURCHASE WITH FUNDS FROM THE FRIENDS OF THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART 68.12
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The Voyage: Ten Years After, 1960–1961 / 1962, oil and charcoal on canvas, 68¾ by 205¾ inches

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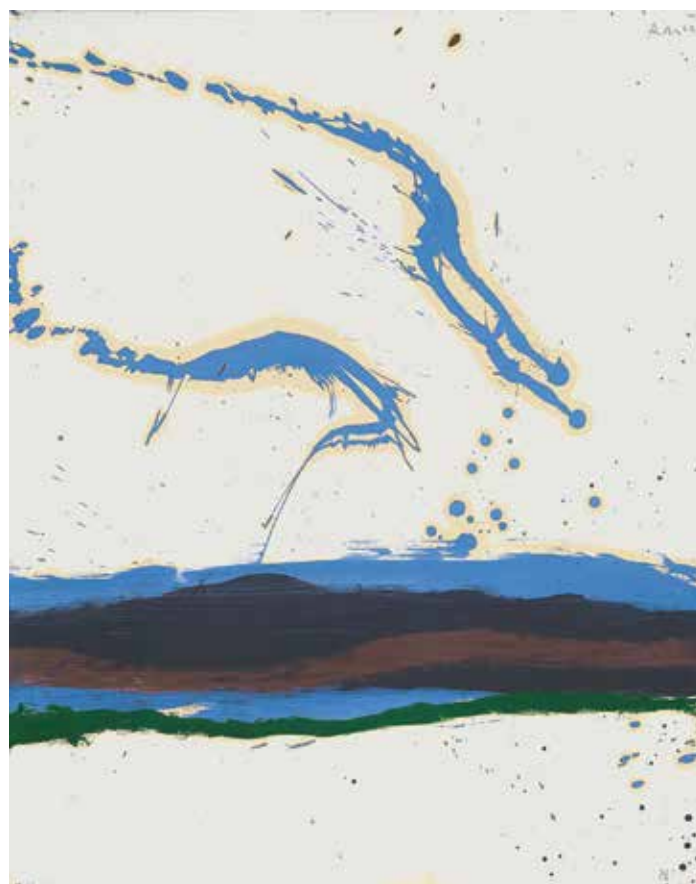
KR: He didn't always say where something was painted, but would regularly inscribe works with specific dates or locations.

JF: When he got back from Provincetown, he'd lay the paintings out in the studio, leaning them against the wall, in anticipation, among other things, of Larry Rubin [President of M. Knoedler & Co., Inc.] coming to choose work. I would usually get there before Rubin. Everything was already laid out. In this instance, they were obviously Provincetown paintings, the fruits of a productive summer.

LM: At the end of the summer, I helped him take those same paintings out of his third-floor studio through the arched doors of Sea Barn. Because the Sea Barn was tall with a very narrow stairway, we hung the paintings from their stretchers on a pulley attached to a protruding beam like a Dutch house, and lowered them to the street. Imagine the sight of large Motherwell canvases swaying in the breeze as they descended to the ground! A bit reminiscent of Helen's banner paintings! Provincetown, with its extraordinary light, laid-back atmosphere, and community, was clearly an important influence on both Helen's and my father's work. The sheer size and number of works they created here capture the essence of Provincetown. While my father showed regularly at the Long Point Gallery and has had several exhibitions at PAAM, Helen's Provincetown paintings have never been exhibited here. Elizabeth and I are excited to bring these paintings back to Provincetown, where they originated and so rightfully belong. 📍



Frankenthaler and Robert Motherwell's motorboat moored at "Sea Barn," 631 Commercial Street, Provincetown, Massachusetts, summer 1968



Beside the Sea No. 18, 1962, oil on paper, 29 by 23 inches

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DOUGLAS DREISHPOON is Director of the Helen Frankenthaler Catalogue Raisonné.

JACK FLAM is President & CEO of the Dedalus Foundation.

LISE MOTHERWELL is a retired psychologist, President of the Board of the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Vice President of the Board of the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, a daughter of Robert Motherwell, and a step-daughter of Helen Frankenthaler.

KATY ROGERS is Programs Director & Catalogue Raisonné Director at the Dedalus Foundation.

Artist CLIFFORD ROSS is Chairman of the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation and Frankenthaler's nephew.

ELIZABETH SMITH is Executive Director of the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation.

Everything Is Interdependent

Angela Dufresne on Helen Frankenthaler's *Holocaust*

In January, I met with artist Angela Dufresne at the RISD Museum, in front of Helen Frankenthaler's Holocaust, 1955. I'd noted in the paintings of both artists a similar combination of exuberance and apocalypse, and imagined Dufresne might share other affinities with Frankenthaler. I'd also heard Dufresne discuss paintings in student critiques at the Rhode Island School of Design before—she issues a torrent of observations from her awesomely widely read mind and viscerally knowing body, peppered with salty asides—and would take any excuse to do so again. Indeed, she had all kinds of insights, as her observations below, distilled from our conversation, attest.

Dufresne was on her way from New York to the Portland Biennial, which featured several portraits of friends she had painted at Skowhegan over the summer. She was just back from the second Women's March, for which she and about fifty artist friends in the group We Make America had spent days making "a giant Pussy Gate—a gate with cats on it—and loads of eagles, surfers, and blue waves, riffing on the Democratic Party midterm theme, 'ride the blue wave.'" She was also right in the middle of developing a solo show and performance for the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art about the centennial of the 1918 Armistice, which ended fighting between the Allies and Germans at the end of World War I, and "coming to terms with that anniversary and how it connects to everything that's going on politically now." Propped up on a dolly in collection storage, Holocaust, too, felt entirely of the present, vividly and disconcertingly so.

—Jennifer Liese

WHEN I WALKED UP to this painting, the first thing that came to mind for me is Gentileschi's beheadings or one of those Viennese floating heads of John the Baptist. You immediately think of violence, and not just because of the title—it's the liquidity of the paint, the sense of bodily fluids. I tend to pictorialize things, so even the signature becomes a part of that hideous bird's-eye view of the Battle of the Marne or the Allied troops landing on the beach at Normandy. To be able to syncopate the materiality of the painting with its meaning is so hard to do without being propagandist or metaphorical, but this painting marries materiality and pathos and lamentation in a way that's absolutely sublime. It isn't metaphorical, it's experiential.

I also think of the "goo" of feminist painting in Mira Schor's "Figure/Ground" essay, which I just reread, but that's looking through the lens of feminism, which we all know Frankenthaler never embraced. It was a different era, with different modes of survival for an artist, but in a way everything she did was feminist. In the *Painters Painting* documentary from the 1970s, she shows up as this badass, unapologetically arrogant, exuberant female in the midst of all these men. Unlike the men's paintings of the period, there's no critique of representation in this work, there's so much independence and liberty. *That* is feminist. The Helen Frankenthaler Foundation just gave a major grant to Skowhegan to make a brand-new studio. I was there last summer, and 65 percent of the artists there were people of color, and many did not come from elite institutions. So her success really does trickle down, to use a pun while looking at these drips. She didn't call herself a feminist, but her commitment to poetic revolutionary thinking was always there.

I'm also thinking of everything that Julia Kristeva ever wrote about abjection, from *Powers of Horror* on down. So—and this is also in hindsight, of course—everything about this painting is abject. The central shape feels as though it's been inverted, like in work by Dona Nelson or Amy Sillman, who, like me, also rotate their fields. That's abjection—being so removed from the body you don't know what's up or down. It's that unbelievable mystifying feeling, like, "Look how beautiful this is, but this is also the very thing that you shouldn't be looking at. This is *death*."

It's deeply primal, and while Frankenthaler would by no means be a fan of the Surrealists, it's highly indebted to them. I think many

young artists over the past decade and a half—and I would include myself—have embraced abstraction because they're super-aware that social media takes away our primal connection with each other. Collaging things together like this is a physical act; it's not cutting and pasting on Photoshop. That's the value of objects, and this is *such* an object. You could never feel that coppery color and that white floating over it on a screen.

Without having made a hundred different kinds of pours and knowing a hundred different ways to use a brush, this painting could not happen. You need emotional intuition and sensitivity and spontaneity, but a painting like this really comes from knowledge, from rehearsed, informed action, from strategic thinking and psychological observation and performance. It only works when all of this comes together. Everything is interdependent. The way the white sits on top of the messy gray creates light and an explosion of flesh. The white doesn't work without the brown area there next to the red. That red is reliant on the black that's oozing over it. These things are radically separate and totally interdependent. Understanding that takes making a lot of paintings. Difference and interconnectedness—it sounds like I'm talking about politics here.

That orange circle in the upper left corner is Barthes's punctum, the emotional center. It could be read in infinite ways. You could read it perspectively, for example, but I think of it as an oddly placed word that creates a conundrum that creates a quagmire—if it were a sentence, you know. It's also a tranquil, peaceful moment amid lots of turmoil, articulating something somewhat ambivalent, the possibility of beauty in all that madness. And that orangey color against all that blown-out sap green—that quiet, soft, nonviolent color relationship—does that, too. You can see where the orange has been painted over, so it probably came first, but the decision to keep it came last, so it's first *and* it's last. I'm speculating on that, but I'm pretty confident that's when it happened. The white strands I'm sure of: that's pouring and brushing with a lot of water and just kind of flinging, letting it sort of dangle. It's the full-on Pollock move, the stick in the bucket.

Do you know Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*? It's set in a near future where morality and ethics have gone threadbare. There's that



Holocaust, 1955, enamel, tube oil pigment, and turpentine on unsized cotton canvas, 68 $\frac{3}{8}$ by 54 inches

THE ALBERT PILAVIN MEMORIAL COLLECTION OF 20TH-CENTURY AMERICAN ART 72.108; MUSEUM OF ART, RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN, PROVIDENCE

kind of “threadbareness” in this image—literally the threadbareness of the canvas, but also in the overly exposed nudity of the mark-making. The main character, Lauren, has this magical skill or illness called “feeler” or hyper-empathy, where if she sees somebody fall and bump their head she feels their pain. Like that, this image might train the person who encounters it to a higher level of empathy and civility. Lauren also poses as a man to survive, and starts to understand what it means to be not locked in a single gender, that we are something bigger than our individual packaging. This is fundamentally the trans idea, that we’re all unique, and gender is just a construct we make. To queer something is to overstep a boundary—the ontology or the logic of what a thing is doing—and this painting is doing that, too.

I’m forever indebted to Frankenthaler. It’s a very dark time, with this backlash against the feminism that Frankenthaler, like many of her generation, didn’t embrace, but that she in fact made possible. She laid

the groundwork. She also found all these different methods to speak in ways that are unspoken. So many of the painters of her time feel design-y or robotic. They have a way of filling the space and creating central forms. There’s no compositional stability in her paintings, no image strategy. It’s like Miles Davis’s *Sketches of Spain*—no melody, only tonal harmonies and dissonances. She’s tireless. Her appetite, her sense of adventure about what you can do in a painting, is infinite. ▣

ANGELA DUFRESNE is a Brooklyn-based artist and Associate Professor in Painting at the Rhode Island School of Design. Her work—which she has described as articulating “non-paranoid, porous ways of being in a world fraught by fear, power, and possession”—has been exhibited at MoMA PS1 and the Hammer Museum, among other institutions, and she has received awards and residencies including a 2016 Guggenheim Fellowship and two Fellowships at the Fine Arts Work Center.

Helen Frankenthaler Remembered

By Bonnie Clearwater



PHOTO BY ROB MCKEEVER, COURTESY OF THE GAGOSIAN GALLERY

Flirt, 1995, acrylic on paper, 60½ by 89½ inches COURTESY OF THE HELEN FRANKENTHALER FOUNDATION, NEW YORK

Few artists ever make it into art history. Even fewer actually influence the direction of art itself. Helen Frankenthaler is one of those artists, recognized as a trailblazer of Modern painting. I was, therefore, greatly surprised when this legend initiated a plan for an exhibition with me. After visiting the Frank Stella exhibition that I had curated for the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, in 2000 (*Frank Stella at 2000: Changing the Rules*), she impishly inquired over lunch, “So when are you organizing my show?” We began hatching plans for the exhibition *Helen Frankenthaler: Paintings on Paper (1949–2002)*, a career survey of her paintings on paper.¹

Over the next two years, I visited Frankenthaler at her home and studio in Darien, Connecticut, where we researched works for the exhibition, spending hours culling through piles of slides. As she held each slide up to the light, she would declare “this one is great” or “this one is not so good.” She would make these assessments so quickly and definitively that I was curious to know what gave her such confidence in her judgment. Where did this sense of competence originate? What was the source of her ability to create works of great critical merit that also simply delighted and engaged the viewer?

The answers to some of these questions are clearly rooted in her art education. Under the guidance of exceptional mentors—including Hans Hofmann and Paul Feeley, who sharpened her eye and intellect—Frankenthaler analyzed and absorbed the qualities of great art throughout history. She would thrill at the way the shadow defining a woman’s neck intersects with her shoulder in a Matisse drawing or the negative space between the limbs of a small Degas bronze nude. She painted color-fields

as vast as Turner’s sublime landscapes, then turned to mastering the murky vistas and darker palette of Whistler that enthralled her later in life. In her 2002 painting on paper, *From the Master*, she translated the highlight reflecting off the tip of the nose of a late Rembrandt self-portrait into a sparkling dab of paint that defines the point closest to the viewer.² In the delightful *Flirt*, 1995, Frankenthaler allowed a thin purple line to fling itself sideways like the dainty extended leg of Fragonard’s coquette in *The Swing* (ca. 1767).³ Describing herself as both a “traditionalist and renegade,” Frankenthaler knew how to contradict the rules of conventional compositions and still make a painting work.

During the course of my research, I made an observation that brought Frankenthaler a sense of closure in her relationship with the influential art critic Clement Greenberg. The two had been romantically involved in the 1950s, and she later regretted that he never wrote extensively about her work, with the exception of the significant mention in his well-known article on Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland in *Art International* (May

1960). Greenberg hailed Louis and Noland as among the few younger artists he considered to be serious candidates for major status. In order to justify his judgment, he demonstrated that the work of the two artists directly descended from that of Jackson Pollock. At this critical moment, Greenberg went on record to make a point, which he often made in conversation, that Frankenthaler's stain-painting technique played a seminal role as a link between Pollock and the two young color-field painters. Greenberg's observation is frequently excerpted in essays on Frankenthaler's work.

When I read the entire article, I was startled to realize that it was written as a partially veiled rebuttal to William Rubin's article "Younger American Painters," in a previous issue of *Art International* (January 1960), which was dismissive of the significance of Frankenthaler's work. While Rubin admired her technique and the beauty of her paintings, he felt they were not "accompanied by a sense of deep meaning in what is said." Greenberg, in his *Art International* article, ascribed a deeper meaning to her work by demonstrating that her stain technique was not a means to relinquish control of the painting, as Rubin contended, but was fundamental to the progress of Modern art as it opened up the possibilities in Pollock's work. Frankenthaler, in Greenberg's opinion, showed the way to eliminate the tactile element from painting—the stain technique made it possible for painting to achieve its purest form as the thinned pigments opened and expanded the picture plane. Moreover, in Greenberg's opinion, Frankenthaler's stain technique contradicted the illusion of pictorial space by emphasizing the literal, physical characteristics of the painting as a flat, opaque surface.

At the time I was working with Frankenthaler on the *Paintings on Paper* exhibition, her health was already deteriorating. When I shared with her how Greenberg's and Rubin's articles were connected, her face lit up. I like to think I helped at this moment to put to rest a disappointment from this important early relationship. Frankenthaler was always moving forward, testing herself, even changing her methods and medium. Although she had confined herself to working on paper for almost a decade, I was amazed that she had found the strength and desire to paint large-scale canvases once more.

While debates still arise about her place in the pantheon of Modern painters, for Frankenthaler, technique was never the end-all. The meaning in her painting comes from the intense emotional experience she brings to the work. Viewers respond because they sense a correspondence between a familiar order of space, image, and structure that is found in nature and the masterpieces of art history, even if the source is not immediately obvious or identifiable. The elusiveness of her sources, in fact, provides pleasure in itself, as the familiarity always seems just beyond grasp. ▣

BONNIE CLEARWATER is Director and Chief Curator of the NSU Art Museum, Fort Lauderdale. She previously was Director and Chief Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami; Curator of the Mark Rothko Foundation, New York; and Director of Art Programs at the Lannan Foundation, Los Angeles. Her publications include *The Rothko Book*, *Mark Rothko: Works on Paper*, *West Coast Duchamp*, *Anselm Kiefer: Works From the Hall Collection*, and *Tracey Emin: Angel Without You*, among others.

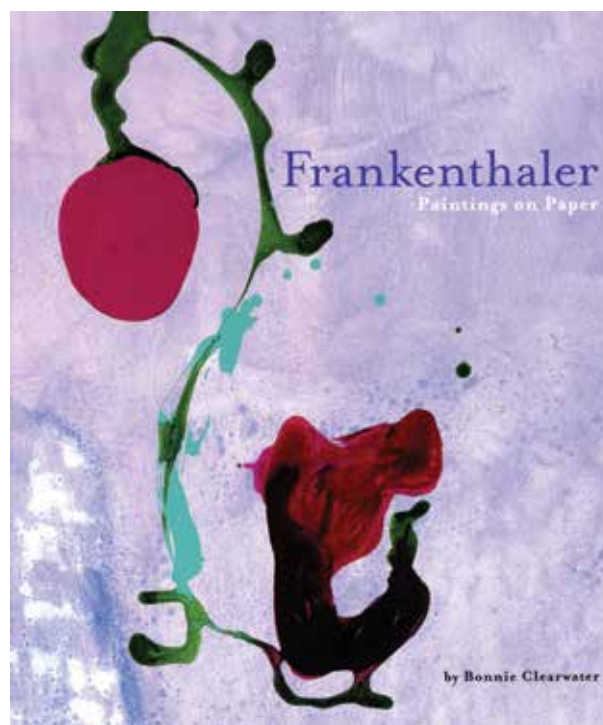
NOTES:

1. The exhibition *Helen Frankenthaler: Paintings on Paper (1949–2002)* was first shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, from February 14 to June 8, 2003, then traveled to the Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, from August 15 to October 26, 2003. Catalogue, with essay, by Bonnie Clearwater.
2. Frankenthaler described to me the thrilling characteristics of the Matisse



(above) *Fiesta*, 1973, acrylic on paper, 22¼ by 30¼ inches COURTESY OF THE HELEN FRANKENTHALER FOUNDATION, NEW YORK
(below) *Eve* (detail), 1995, on catalogue cover for Frankenthaler's works on paper retrospective, Miami Museum of Contemporary Art, February 14 to June 8, 2003

PHOTO BY TIM PYLE, LIGHT BLUE STUDIO, COURTESY OF THE HELEN FRANKENTHALER FOUNDATION



drawing and the Degas bronze, which were in her collection (Henri Matisse, *Buste de Femme Au Collier*, 1922, charcoal on paper, 20¼ by 15¾ inches; Edgar Degas, *Woman Washing Her Left Leg*, 1896–1911, bronze, 6 by 4¾ by 6 inches), as well as her love for Turner's landscapes, the murky palette of late Whistler, and the late Rembrandt self-portrait (Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait*, 1659, oil on canvas, 33½ by 26 inches, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Andrew W. Mellon Collection).

3. I always meant to ask Frankenthaler about the potential connection between *Flirt* and Fragonard's *The Swing*, but never had the opportunity to discuss it with her. In my essay for *Frankenthaler: Paintings on Paper*, I observed how *Flirt*, and a few other paintings on paper from this period, such as *Aerie* and *Eve*, "contain elements of gentle humor and a playful sexuality that lift the spirit." I described how the "pink *Flirt* extends its organically growing branch to the bottom right of the composition as if to reach out and tickle the viewer." (Frankenthaler approved the text for the essay.)

Helen Frankenthaler, Unintentional Feminist

By Mira Schor

Gordon Parks's frequently reproduced photograph for *LIFE* magazine of Helen Frankenthaler seated barefoot on a painting on the floor of her studio, completely immersed in a sea of her paintings on floor and wall, with flowing blue paint the primary motif, is truly iconic. This photograph, published May 13, 1957, is on the same level of importance as an image and a symbol as Hans Namuth's transformational photographs of Pollock flinging paint on canvas laid on the floor of his studio. It is a beautiful photograph; the color is thrilling as is the pride of the artist in the world of her work. It is also an intriguing and alluring photograph of a young woman. But the very nature of the allure is also ironic from the point of a feminist interpretation—let's face it, she's young and pretty, she's barefoot, and she is on the floor in a pose of a woman in a harem, looking up provocatively at the male viewer. It is significant that photographer Parks posed her that way, and the published image is one of several different versions, with varied expressions.

Frankenthaler did not associate herself with the feminist movement of the 1970s. This is not unusual. Denial of feminism is a long-standing and depressing staple of women artists' biographies, including many of the women in major exhibitions such as *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution* at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles in 2007 (and PS1 MoMA in 2008), which featured artists associated with, or adopted by, feminist artists, historians, and critics interested in women artists and feminism. Nevertheless, noted women artists such as Alice Neel and Louise Bourgeois gave out mixed messages in the 1970s and later: they might distinguish themselves from the feminist movement while accepting the benefits of renewed and revitalized interest in their work because of it. Also, they couldn't repress their personal rage at having been subjected to disparagement, given faint praise, or ignored outright by the male-dominated art world and by the men in their personal lives. And, like any canny artist, they accepted interesting feminist analysis of their work in a strategic way, whether they agreed with it or not, because it enhanced their reputation and brought attention that eventually had results beyond the limits of the feminist world, in the "real" art world (of men).

Frankenthaler was one of several artists in the *LIFE* article "Women Artists in Ascendancy: Young Group Reflects Lively Virtues of U.S. Painting."¹ That she was included, when she was only twenty-eight years old, indicates the level of fame she had already achieved as an artist. It was helpful that she came from a privileged background, had the best advanced education in the early postwar era, and had the financial wherewithal to have a studio in New York and the ability to focus on her work once she left college. She also was a very good painter and very ambitious in terms of her painting as well as her career. In her first years in the art world, she also just happened to be romantically involved with the most powerful art critic of the time, Clement Greenberg.

Nevertheless, her effort to distance herself from feminism needs to be seen in relation to how she was treated, and in one case one might well say betrayed, by the powerful male critics of the time, on unmistakably gendered terms. In her important essay "Reconsidering the Stain: On Gender and the Body in Helen Frankenthaler's Painting," Lisa Saltzman details how in the New York School, "art criticism turned these complex paintings into either heroic symbols of masculinity or denigrated emblems of femininity."² Saltzman quotes E. C. Goossen on Frankenthaler, writing in *Art International* in 1961: "Frankenthaler's painting is manifestly that of a woman. . . . Without Pollock's painting hers is unthinkable. What she took from him was masculine; the almost hard-edged, linear

splashes of duco enamel. What she made with it was distinctly feminine, the broad, bleeding-edged stain on raw linen. With this translation she added a new candidate for the dictionary of plastic forms, the stain."³ While Frankenthaler's most famous paintings—including the painting that established her place in history books, *Mountains and Sea*, from 1952—feature linear structural elements, Saltzman points out that what really interested contemporary male critics was the relationship of the stained areas to the female body and menstruation.

Saltzman also details Greenberg's betrayal of Frankenthaler. Having famously taken Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland, two young painters from Washington, DC, to see Frankenthaler's new stain paintings in her studio without her presence,⁴ he began praising Louis's subsequent use of the pour-and-stain method in gendered terms that praised their hardness and sharpness, using language comparing them to ejaculation and giving them more praise than Frankenthaler's forms, which were now seen as accidental. Meanwhile, New York's other dominant art critic, Harold Rosenberg, praised artists like Pollock while implying that Frankenthaler was a passive conduit for her paint: "Apparently, Miss Frankenthaler has never grasped the moral and metaphysical basis of Action painting, and since she is content to let the pigment do most of the acting, her paintings fail to develop resistances against which a creative act can take place."⁵

Even though Frankenthaler distanced herself from feminism in the 1970s, she ultimately could not prevent generations of women artists from "reclaiming the stain" and embracing her work as a model for a feminist exploration of abstract painting, as well as Lynda Benglis's early floor-based poured painting as sculpture—itsself work that surely emerged from Frankenthaler's model. Subsequent generations of women artists have embraced ideas about liquidity, spillage, and stain as valuable metaphors for female embodiment, an interpretation that was exactly what Frankenthaler most wanted to distance herself from, given the misogynist critiques of her stains as essential rather than as aesthetic decisions in comparison to her male contemporaries' use of the same methods.

Katy Siegel's 2015 book *"The heroine Paint" After Frankenthaler* offers an exemplary revisionist history of Frankenthaler's work and documents the influence of her work among many artists, including Benglis, Dona Nelson, Cecily Brown, and Carrie Moyer. It is ironic that since the mid-'80s there has been a vigorous and often very divisive argument against such essentialist views of what constitutes femininity or even the body of a woman—the idea that biology is destiny and that what is essential



COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, DC

Mountains and Sea, 1952, oil and charcoal on unsized, unprimed canvas, 86³/₈ by 117¹/₄ inches
HELEN FRANKENTHALER FOUNDATION, NEW YORK, ON EXTENDED LOAN TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, DC

cannot be changed, thereby negating the possibility of any change in the oppressive or unequal conditions of women's lives, was roundly condemned. One result of this argument was that painting itself, the deployment of gooey or flowing matter, was seen as suspect: the "Pictures Generation" looked to photography and film in order to represent social construction of gender. That is, in fact, the basis of the return of women painters since the '90s to reclaim the influence of Frankenthaler.

All of which is to say that an artist ultimately can't control how her work is seen. Further, artists who try to control interpretation can end up limiting how their work is understood and discussed. It seems significant that some of the most interesting exhibitions of Frankenthaler's work have come after her death in 2011: for many, *Painted on 21st Street: Helen Frankenthaler from 1950 to 1959*, at Gagosian Gallery in New York City in 2013, focusing on the work she did in her twenties, was a revelation—so much more vibrant and impressive for the scale, ambition, boldness, and skill of her work, at all stages of an incredibly speedy growth, than the more conventional and sometimes repetitive exhibition at MoMA in 1989, *Helen Frankenthaler: A Paintings Retrospective*.

That Frankenthaler separated herself from feminism is completely understandable given the conditions of art reception and criticism when she entered the art world, yet it did not prevent women artists from taking her work as inspiration. Unfortunately, she also aligned herself in later years with some of the most conservative and flat out maliciously reactionary elements of the art and political world in the '80s, such as when she helped to eliminate the NEA critic's grant, during a period when senators like Jesse Helms were leading a campaign against artistic expression. Critic Robert Atkins noted these efforts in the *Village Voice* in 1991:

Despite the agency's stated mission to help foster art understanding, a vocal minority on the National Council—the chairman's presidentially appointed advisory group—spent much of the '80s lobbying against "anything that smell[ed] of criticism," as NEA fellow Ann McQueen put it in her 1990 report obtained by the *Voice*.

Comprising Joseph Epstein, Jacob Neusner, *New Criterion* publisher Samuel Lipman, and painter Helen (nary-a-good-review-since-'62) Frankenthaler, the council's neo-con cabal killed what it regarded as the left-leaning-critic's fellowships in 1983. (Some have suggested that the council's assault on critics was a dress rehearsal for the contemplated dismantling of the entire NEA.) By the late '80s, the National

Council's antipathy to criticism had grown so virulent that a rejection of a 1988 grant to the Center for Arts Criticism was actually overridden by Reagan-appointed chairman Frank Hodsoll. . . . More important, the intransigent anticriticism minority on the National Council is nearly history: Lipman's tenure ended in 1988; Neusner's, Epstein's, and Frankenthaler's terms were up in 1990, although the last two continue to serve pending replacement. While report-writer McQueen feels optimistic that criticism will be more broadly funded by the NEA of the '90s, she also observed that "I don't think they'll ever go back to individual grants for critics."⁶

Given how Greenberg and Rosenberg may be seen as having undervalued or denigrated her contribution to American art, this position is understandable on a personal (perhaps unconscious) level, yet the end of this grant had a real-world chilling effect on an occupation that is singularly unremunerative in the best of

times and yet crucial to a functioning art world. The fact that she aligned herself with some of the worst reactionaries in the American art world at the time is a painful reminder that good artists can have bad politics.

At the meeting of art and politics, artworks can contain political meanings that even the artist may not fully embrace, and even a great artist can sometimes make harmful decisions for complex reasons. But, ultimately, the artworks themselves, and how other artists embrace them and grow from them, defy the political specificities of any particular moment in time. For this reason, Helen Frankenthaler will always have an important place at the nexus of art, history, and feminism. ▣

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Notes:

1. "Women Artists in Ascendancy: Young Group Reflects Lively Virtues of U.S. Painting," *LIFE* magazine, no. 19 (May 1957): 74–77. A PDF of this issue of *LIFE* magazine is available online at edwardtylernahemfineart.com/attachment/en/588263605a40919f008b4568/Press/5882639c5a40919f008b58ee, accessed April 17, 2018. The other artists featured were Grace Hartigan, Joan Mitchell, and Nell Blaine (both also photographed on the floor of their studios), and Jane Wilson, posed alluringly reclining on a sofa. As John Berger has noted in *Ways of Seeing*, the representation of women is always an embodiment of the male gaze and of patriarchal values, and women artists even today must negotiate the meaning of the poses they take in promotional photography.
2. Lisa Saltzman, "Reconsidering the Stain: On Gender and the Body in Helen Frankenthaler's Painting," in *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After Postmodernism*, Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, eds. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005): 374.
3. E. C. Goossen, quoted in Saltzman, 375.
4. It is not verified whether Greenberg took them there without Frankenthaler's knowledge nor whether she was present during the visit, but it is likely she was not present.
5. Harold Rosenberg, "Art and Words," in *The De-definition of Art* (New York: Horizon Press, 1972): 64; quoted in Saltzman, 376.
6. Robert Atkins, "Crit Beat," *Village Voice*, March 5, 1991: 78. Available online at robertatkins.net/beta/witness/culture/nea/continuing.html, accessed April 17, 2018.

Jeannie Motherwell

Chance Favors the Ready Mind

By Christopher Busa

Last fall, I spoke with the artist Jeannie Motherwell in Boston at the Rafius Fane Gallery, amid a solo installation of her new, larger paintings, aptly titled *Pour. Push. Layer*. Cate McQuaid, reviewing the show in the *Boston Globe*, wrote, “The title gives away her kinship with Frankenthaler, who stained her Color Field canvases with poured paint. Motherwell’s affinity for black echoes her father’s. . . . This and all [of] Motherwell’s paints pit generation against collapse, and are as capricious as light flashing on water. They pin us with similar intensity—a moment of coming to be that will just as soon vanish.”

This review mentions Motherwell’s connection with the artists Robert Motherwell and Helen Frankenthaler, her father and stepmother, who were two iconic figures in midcentury abstraction. And, while their story is a natural segue into a discussion of Motherwell’s work and shows some early influences, this influence merely reflects the beginning of Jeannie Motherwell’s artistic journey. Over forty years of painting, she has created her own legacy in her innovative techniques and bold vision of abstract painting.

JEANNIE MOTHERWELL WAS BORN into a culture where the idea of being an artist involved a communication with unconscious processes. During the thirteen years Robert Motherwell was married to Helen Frankenthaler (1958–71), Jeannie and Lise, children of Robert’s second marriage to Betty Little, were growing up under the tutelage of icons of American art, each projecting power and natural confidence. When Robert Motherwell first came to New York in the fall of 1940, he assessed the young artists he encountered and concluded that talent was abundant, but many artists failed to find a “point of attack,” meaning that their work was not guided by a personal “creative principle.” For Motherwell, it was important to attend to the hints, clues, and spontaneous associations that bubble up into being during the process of working. The “creative principle,” he discovered, was the daily activity of what the Surrealists described as “automatism.” This was the method that revealed one’s originality to oneself; the spontaneous gesture that showed the honest signature of one’s intuitive impulses. Motherwell liked to say, “The only thing I have over any other painter is that I’m the only one who can make Motherwells.”

Helen Frankenthaler, stepmother to Jeannie in her formative years, between ages five and seventeen, had a strong influence on her stepdaughter’s life and work. Fundamental to Frankenthaler’s ability to find her own independent “point of attack” in her work is the inspiration she received from seeing Pollock’s shows at the Betty Parsons Gallery, an impact made even more emphatic by a 1951 visit to Pollock’s studio in Springs, East Hampton, where she actually saw how his paintings were made. A decade later, Frankenthaler, in her early thirties, became an art-world star with her youthful “retrospective” at the Jewish Museum in New York.

As a female artist succeeding in the male-dominated art world of the 1950s, Frankenthaler was a role model for Jeannie and many other young artists; perhaps she was an even greater influence in the way she focused on the work itself rather than engage in debates about her art in terms of her sex. In a 1965 interview in *Artforum*, Frankenthaler was asked by Henry Geldzahler how being a woman affected her painting. The artist answered with the aplomb of one possessing natural self-confidence: “Looking at my paintings as if they were painted by a woman

is superficial, a side issue, like looking at [Franz] Klines and saying they are bohemian. The making of serious painting is difficult and complicated for all serious painters. One must be oneself.” In John Gruen’s book *The Party’s Over Now* (Viking Press, 1972), she was quoted as saying, “I don’t resent being a female painter. I don’t exploit it. I paint.”

She had her detractors, especially among the male art critics of this period. In his essay “Art and Words,” Harold Rosenberg tartly criticized the artist, saying that the “vital actor” in a Frankenthaler painting is not Frankenthaler but the paint, which was more in control than she was. He stated: “The artist is the medium of her medium.” In a review in *Art International*, E. C. Goossen viewed the artist as the female heir to Pollock: “Frankenthaler’s painting is manifestly that of a woman. . . . Without Pollock’s painting, hers is unthinkable. What she took from him was masculine.” John Elderfield put it another way: “Femininity has long been an available metaphor to describe such qualities of painting as lyricism, delicacy, colorfulness, and restraint.” Regarding colors that are “feminine,” Amy Sillman raises the issue of the “politics of color,” pointing out that Pollock’s colors in *Number 1 (Lavender Mist)* (1950) are not “diaphanous” like Frankenthaler’s stained colors.



Helen Frankenthaler (center) with Jeannie Motherwell (right) and Lise Motherwell (left) in front of their New York City residence, early '60s COURTESY OF JEANNIE MOTHERWELL

PHOTO BY ALAN SHAYNE

I find it strange that Pollock is so often referred to as a seminal artist in terms of his originality. The roots of his work, in the connotations of fluidity and fecundity, are abundant in other artists' repertoires and boldly represented in the art of Helen Frankenthaler. Here, perhaps, is the locus of Frankenthaler's historical significance in altering the waning cultural meme of what is called the "male universal," where *he* includes *her*, implying in our very language a hierarchal ordering of gender.

Even though Frankenthaler rejected an identity of being a "woman painter," she was mindful of the feminist artists who were inspired by her example over the last six decades. This illuminating history is detailed in *"The heroine Paint" After Frankenthaler: Stains, Flows, Decoration, Play, Ambition: A Different Account of Painting from the 1950s to the Present Day*, a collection of extraordinary contributions by contemporary artists and art historians including Liz Hirsch, Daniel Belasco, Carroll Dunham, John Elderfield, Barbara Guest, Harmony Hammond, Suzanne Hudson, Carrie Moyer, Laura Owens, Lane Relyea, Dwight Ripley, Sterling Ruby, Amy Sillman, Howard Singerman, Tracy K. Smith, and Mary Weatherford. The range of discussions raises questions never asked before and offers a previously unrecognized parallel history to the macho orientation of the Abstract Expressionists. The book was edited by Katy Siegel, who writes about the "bind" confronting these artists:

They didn't want to be acknowledged as women, but it was equally unacceptable to openly claim a "masculine" role. They were left to triangulate between publicly rebuffing categorization, playing with or debating the role of the feminine among friends, and assuming masculine traits. . . . In retrospect, this very incoherence of identity may have allowed them a certain freedom.

MY YOUNGER SISTER, Marianne, was a childhood friend of Jeannie Motherwell. During summers in Provincetown, they collected shells along the beach across from Commercial Street and played hopscotch on the chalked lines they drew on little-used Allerton Street. ("Great for children," Robert Motherwell once wrote about the location of "Sea Barn," the family home with two studios that he shared with Helen.) My father, Peter Busa, a colleague of Motherwell in New York in the early forties, owned a house and studio half a block east from Sea Barn on Commercial Street. The neighborhood was dense with artists working in studios adjacent to the commotion of domestic life—the artists Arthur Cohen, Anne Packard, Suzanne Sinaiko, Lily Harmon, Mervin Jules, Leo Manso, Howie Schneider, Umberto Romano, Jack Kearney, Richard Florsheim, Lila Katzen, Henry Rothman, and Phil Malicoat first come to mind. Children wandered in and out of their parents' studios; they were often asked to offer opinions about works in progress.

Robert Motherwell and Helen Frankenthaler discouraged their children from using coloring books; instead, they provided them with paper and paint and pastels from their own studios, then displayed on the refrigerator door the most eye-catching drawings and spontaneously written poems, which they would all discuss at lunch. On visits to galleries and museums, the children were asked to select a favorite painting. "This was a huge responsibility," Motherwell recalled. "If you liked something, you were obliged to say why. Helen and Dad prompted us consistently to say what we thought about a particular painting, especially at one of their openings."

Motherwell told me about the genesis of her name, Jeannie, which her father chose in honor of the Stephen Foster song, "Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair," and the poems of Robert Burns. She said, "It's my given name, with Burns being the middle name of my Scottish father. Dad didn't want people to know he had a middle name after somebody famous."



Fracture, 2017, acrylic on Claybord, 48 by 60 by 2 inches

Just before Motherwell began classes at Bard College, her father told her that he and Helen were getting a divorce; that next year he would marry the German photographer Renate Ponsold. "I think it was 1971 when he took me to St. Gallen, Switzerland, where he was commissioned to make some prints," she recalled. "From there, we went to Germany to pick up his new Mercedes convertible, which at that time was not available in the States. We drove all through the winding roads of the South of France with the top open to the summer air. We bonded on that trip. It was the first time I was having adult conversations with my father, at a time when I was developing my own interest in art and had found the school where I was going to major in painting. Bard had a great art department. All of the professors there were artists actively showing in SoHo and abroad."

While at Bard, Motherwell made weekend visits to see her father in Greenwich, Connecticut, two hours away. She would drop off her car and then take the train to New York to see art shows, but first she would often go into her father's studio to see what he was working on. She was drawn like a magnet to his signature black paintings, and one day her father asked her why. She said, "Black is my favorite color," blurting out that she did not see black as the absence of color, but as a color as primary as red, blue, or yellow. In her own paintings, she limits her palette to the powerful interplay of a few restricted combinations. She mentioned to her father, "If I'm about to begin a painting, unsure of what to do, I'll begin with black." His response: "You really do get black, don't you?"

In her junior year of college, Motherwell moved into a New York loft purchased for her by her father, which gave her a large living and working space on Mercer Street in the vibrant early days of SoHo. Nearby, at the buzzing corner bar Fanelli's, she met with friends to discuss shows they had seen and what openings to attend on the weekend. Summers, she spent in Provincetown in the Mermaid Apartments, next door to her father's Sea Barn, which had three separate quarters for Lise, Jeannie, and frequent guests—art dealers, critics, historians, and reporters.

For thirty summers, Motherwell worked in her water-view studio, with mesmerizing drama ever present in the ripples of water, blasts of wind, and cascades of waves soaring skyward from concussions against the bulkhead—an image that inspired her father's *Beside the Sea* series. Motherwell told me that she hears "a humming drama when the sea is flat and calm." She began to see how a breeze creates small "capillary waves," fine as fingerprints, as it flows across and grips the surface of the water. For a period, her paintings referenced the loss of Provincetown fishermen she had known on the vessel *Patricia Marie*, which was



Chrysalis, 2017, acrylic on Claybord, 48 by 60 by 2 inches

destroyed in a storm in 1976. Triangles of painted paper began to flutter in her collages, obliquely evoking the silence of abstracted draggers skimming over water.

Motherwell initially evolved a working process derived from the “collage aesthetic,” so consistently cited by her father as the essence of Modernism, since collage was the only medium capable of expressing the cacophony of contemporary life. Gradually, however, Motherwell departed from the torn-paper edges of her early collages and began producing sinuously fluid new paintings. These pieces reflected a vital unfettered freedom in her technique, in which liquid harmonies of poured paint flowed naturally from a combination of the force of gravity and the intuitive guidance she provided with squeegees, brushes, sticks, and cheesecloth. She would also physically lift the canvas from its level position on the floor, further controlling the direction and speed of the flowing paint.

Motherwell described her process to me: “I start by working with the piece laid out on the floor, then after it is dry enough I work with it hanging on the wall, then go back to the floor, depending on how many layers I need to add. On the floor, if I move the canvas or board, I can lift and move the flow. I do other things to manipulate the desired effect, but I tend not to put my handprint on it too much. I want the results to feel natural and fresh, as if it were revealed in an instant.”

The sense that an exploding image is arrested while in motion is the result of years of experimentation. “It’s a visceral feeling where I know I can’t push it any further,” she explained. She yields to these intuitive limits, mindful that even nature’s expressions of great force—crested waves or flames grasping at the sky—always seem to hold energy in reserve. She experimented with splatter effects, but, unlike Pollock, transitioned into a new technique in which absorbent ground mixed with gesso generated a different effect on the canvas. “It would often break things up in a way that gave me something new to like and work with,” she said.

Her large, recent paintings boldly explode with fascinating chemical reactions. Her trial-and-error experiments with various mediums cause unexpected results, surprises sometimes as plainly beautiful as the breaking of dawn. She also experiments with alternative surfaces—canvas, plywood, silk, and Claybord, which is made from a very fine clay. “It’s the same kind used in women’s makeup,” she explained, “which is manufactured into a very smooth surface. The paint lies on it beautifully, then you apply water and/or a medium and it

goes *wacko*! I mix gesso with certain amounts of absorbent ground on my canvases, which allows for a marvelous natural stain effect. Amazing things happen, and I capitalize on them. The *mistakes*—no, not the mistakes—the *accidents* would remind me of galaxies to further explore.” Slowly, over years, Motherwell has evolved a way of working that does not depend on brushes, removing as much as possible the evidence of an artist’s hand, and allowing independent processes to find their own resolution.

Hans Hofmann urged a fundamental understanding of the commonalities between abstraction and figuration, telling artists not to imitate nature, but to imitate nature’s processes; for example, by portraying the way the force of wind can reveal the back sides of leaves or show the shape of a sail—a dynamic picture of motion and energy. In this sense, Jeannie Motherwell’s forms do not resemble figures from reality so much as express her kinship with serendipitous emotional memories revealed by chance. Like Helen and Bob, she trusts her intuition.

A major change for Motherwell was relocating from a studio in Provincetown to a studio in Somerville, where she discovered the sky above her, not the ocean around her. She commented on this new “stargazing” perspective in her current artist’s statement:

I am amazed by the images and mysteries of the oceans and skies in changing weather, Hubble-type images of the universe, and my own physicality during the painting process. It has inspired my recent body of work for many years. My paintings, which are quite abstract, have an intimacy to the space in them but also an immensity. The process I use and the mere physicality of it help me explore spatial complexities that yield marvelous surprises. They often carry me in directions I cannot anticipate. I like to think of my paintings as an “event” or an “occurrence”; that is, an action that emerges in the here and now—where the subject matter symbolizes the images and mysteries of creation.

Here I am mindful of a surprising analogy with this artist’s contemporary “motion studies” and the groundbreaking experiments in visualization of Harold Edgerton at MIT in 1936, using a high-speed camera and a stroboscopic light, when he famously recorded his silent film *Seeing the Unseen*. The film reveals the acrobatics of milk drops as they somersault into gorgeous shapes after being splattered on a hard, flat surface and tracks the motion of a red-hot poker as it plunges into brine, showing the turbulent beauty of its sizzle.

Titles of Motherwell’s paintings offer clues into her thinking. They are somewhat provocative, encouraging the viewer’s emotional associations



The Eyes of Argus, 2016, acrylic on Claybord, 48 by 70 inches



A Sacred Trade, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 48 by 67 inches

and offering suggestions rather than explanations of the paintings' import. She, like Frankenthaler, does not work in a serial manner, creating variations of related bodies of work. Rather, each work seeks to express something unique in itself; in this way, Motherwell shows the synthesis and harmonizing of her influences.

The painting *Fracture* implies a kind of explosion, rather than portraying an image of an actual object. The division in the image has the amorphous symmetry of a Rorschach inkblot. This allusion to Rorschach is significant. Psychological suggestivity is a phenomenon that produces pareidolic effects, in which one's perception of meaning in ambiguous visual images reveals likenesses in the real world. Symmetry appears abundantly in organic forms, but is absent from inorganic forms, such as clouds or rocks. Another psychological effect is the perception of movement without motion, and how motion can be evoked by unstructured forms.

Strange forms are found with lucky blunders, and this is why Abstract Expressionists were keenly alert to the transformative possibilities of chance. Psychologically, Rorschach inkblots, which were so interesting to artists of the '40s and '50s, played with the idea of symmetry and showed that even an ugly shape can become appealing when it is flopped into a mirror image, creating an "amorphous symmetry." The viewer has permission to read the image in ways personally meaningful, with felt associations becoming active in the experience of looking.

Another painting, *Chrysalis*, which reflects a birth image in the sheltering encasement for a budding seed, is one of only a few of the artist's works that summon figuration. Helen Frankenthaler once said that she didn't like Arshile Gorky's work when hints of figuration were too obvious in his painting. When I later asked Motherwell if she was conscious of the birthing metaphor when painting, she answered, "Not at all."

In *The Eyes of Argus*, Motherwell reduces and concentrates the one hundred eyes of Argus, the many-eyed giant of Greek mythology, to four ovoid apertures. The focus here on the expanding power of the white of the inner eye recalls her father's use of black in his thunderous *Elegies*.

In our discussion at the Rafius Fane Gallery, Motherwell reflected on Frankenthaler: "When making some of these paintings, Helen came into my mind. I had been thinking of her very intensely ever since she had become ill, in the last years of her life, and could no longer paint. Not painting must have been breaking her heart and spirit, and so it spurred me into painting larger pieces with new ideas. There were times while I was painting that I felt I was almost channeling her, and I'd exclaim, 'Oh, that's how she did it!' Without consciously trying, I could really feel her spirit."

Motherwell also discussed how Frankenthaler would critique her paintings: "She used to say things like, 'That's very good,' but she never disparaged anything. Dad would say things like, 'Don't touch that. It's

done!' When I first started making collages in the seventies using postcards and bits of small imagery, he might say, 'That's good—it's almost tacky, but it's not.'" She would ponder her father's remarks for weeks, anguishing over what he meant in his sphinx-like, cryptic comments. "His remarks were not meant to wound me," she said. "He was trying to teach me in his own way how to tell the difference between what is genuinely good and what is not. He encouraged me to find that out for myself, rather than teach me."

While Bob and Helen clearly had much harmony in their working relationship, Motherwell recalled that there was also a competitive dynamic between them: "I don't think I was conscious of competition between them when I was very young. However, I noticed later on that they were very competitive about a lot of things, and the artistic factor had to be a part of it. There was a time early on in their marriage when their work was very similar. They were even using each other's colors. I have a small painting on paper by Helen, which was made when Dad was sick with the flu. She went down to his studio, painted it, and wrote in pen, *Please Feel Better*. In the painting, she used Dad's yellow

ochre paint, probably the first color she came across in his studio."

In Motherwell's recent works, one can see something in common with the working process of both her father and Frankenthaler: each tested their spontaneity against their own very intelligent scrutiny and revision. Their practice was to isolate and capture an authentic mood, revealing the self to the self in the *éclat* of surprise. But, having spent many hours talking with Robert Motherwell about what is good in a painting, I know that it was his deeply sourced critical facility that confirmed the success of a painting. Compared to Jeannie Motherwell's earlier collages with torn edges, the flow in these new and related paintings seems unimpeded, able to extend and fulfill the artist's impulse.

A discussion about *A Sacred Trade* offers a good concluding comment about Motherwell's work. "This title refers to what it means to be an artist—the sacrifices the artist makes, like the fisherman," she told me. "In this particular painting, I saw the ghost image of the *Patricia Marie*. This was after I had stopped painting my boat paintings and collages, so it is of significance to my work." The "ghost" image is a star-bright concentration of the stellar shape of a ship, almost electric in the intensity of whiteness, a white even whiter than the color that surrounds the surreal apparition. And the surrounding blacks have the deep magnetic attraction that Motherwell always felt as a power in her father's black paintings. The chemistry of Motherwell's lineage has yielded a new element in the periodic table of painting.

Motherwell asked me if I saw a family resemblance in her paintings. "I hope mine don't look like Helen made them!" she said. "I don't start with a memory. I start with a process. The process reveals things to me, like a feeling of familiarity, and as these revelations happen, I can then begin to edit."

Robert Motherwell once stated that the medium of painting had the potential to express the complexity of a human being, but only when the painting triggered an authentic experience in the viewer. I am reminded of this when I see the synthesis of complexity and intuitive response in the work of Jeannie Motherwell.

Noting that some of her paintings are streaked with spurts of energetic black gestures, I said, "Those streaks of black are very Motherwellian."

"Which Motherwell?" Jeannie asked. ☒

This summer in Provincetown, Jeannie Motherwell's work will be shown at AMP Gallery, July 27–August 8, at the same time that the Provincetown Art Association and Museum presents a major display of Helen Frankenthaler's work in the exhibition Abstract Climates: Helen Frankenthaler in Provincetown, July 6–September 2, 2018.

CHRISTOPHER BUSA is founder and editorial director of Provincetown Arts Press.

Balancing Acts

HOW THE FINE ARTS WORK CENTER CAME TO BE

By Ben Brooks

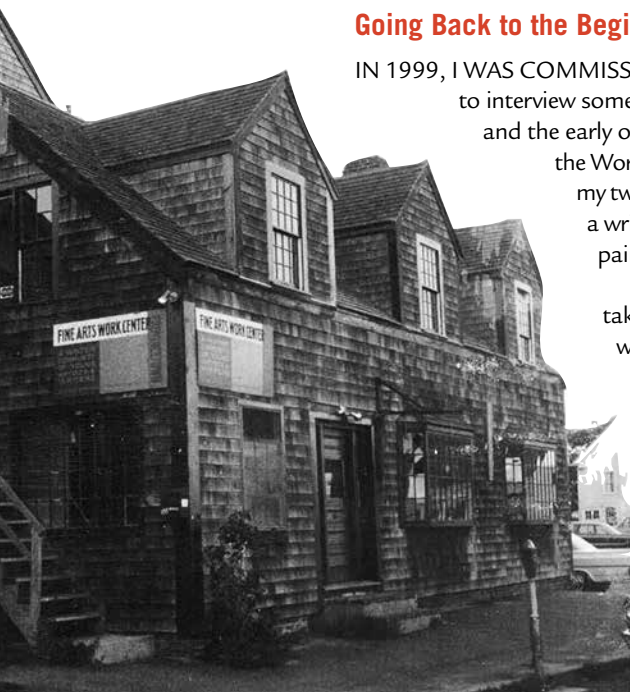
CELEBRATING ITS FIFTIETH YEAR in 2018, the Fine Arts Work Center (FAWC) in Provincetown has become a major component of the American cultural landscape, nurturing and sending forth a continuous stream of visual artists and writers—painters, sculptors, hybrid artists, conceptual artists, fiction writers, poets, memoirists—who have assumed and continue to assume significant roles in shaping the arts in this country. Winners of a multitude of awards and prizes, artists with works in prominent museums and galleries, and authors of best-selling and groundbreaking works of literature, former FAWC Fellows are now among our culture's leading voices and image-makers in contemporary literary and visual arts.

At the same time that it set out, in the late 1960s, to nurture younger artists toward the beginnings of their careers, the Work Center also sought to reinvigorate the art scene in Provincetown and on the Lower Cape. The goal of the founders of the Work Center was to create a community within a community: artists and writers would come to Provincetown and interact with one another—nurture one another—and also live within and interact with the larger community of the town. Young artists would be surrounded by other young artists working in the same disciplines as themselves, as well as artists working in very different modes and disciplines—all of which would serve the purpose of stimulating creativity and opening up Fellows to new ideas and approaches to their work. And rather than live in a closed-off community of young artists, the Fellows would be immersed in the life of this unique town, an additional stimulation to their work.

Going Back to the Beginning

IN 1999, I WAS COMMISSIONED by Hunter O'Hanian, then Director of the Fine Arts Work Center, to interview some of the people who were most involved in the conception, the founding, and the early operation of the organization, as part of a project to preserve and record the Work Center's history and legacy. I was delighted to take part in this project, as my two years as a writing Fellow played a critical role in my own development as a writer, and the four years that I lived in Provincetown with my wife, Nancy, a painter, and our two young children, had been a high-water period of my life.

I spent two productive years writing a novel plus numerous short stories, taking full advantage of the time and space that my Fellowship provided, my work stimulated in myriad ways by my interactions with compatriot writers and artists, as well as by living in Provincetown. Beyond that, my family became fully engaged with life in the town. My children went to school in Provincetown. Nancy and I obtained shellfishing licenses. I even played in the winter recreational basketball league at the high school, on a team made up of both Fellows and non-Fellows. My wife and I made close friends over those four years in Provincetown, both at the Work Center and outside the Work Center, many of whom remain friends today.





(above) Installation shot of *The Beginning: The Work Center Takes Wing, Founders and Friends*, curated by Bailey Bob Bailey, one of several exhibitions honoring the 50th anniversary in 2018, with works by (left to right) Fritz Bultman, Robert Motherwell and Stanley Kunitz, and Jack Tworokv PHOTO BY NAYA BRICHER
(facing page) The first building that housed the Fine Arts Work Center on Standish Street

So in September of 1999, at the Work Center’s behest, while living again in the FAWC barn for the month, I conducted a series of informal interviews with Stanley Kunitz, Alan Dugan and Judith Shahn, Roger Skillings, Ruth Hiebert, Berta Walker, Conrad Malicoat, and Jeanne Bultman, and solicited from them both facts and opinions about the early days at the FAWC. I had known these people for over twenty years, from my time as a Fellow and from my continued involvement with the Work Center and with Provincetown.

This history is based on these 1999 interviews, as well as on archival materials and records that were made available to me by the Fine Arts Work Center.

Balancing Acts

WITH ITS *sui generis* mission of providing support to artists in the early stages of their careers outside of an academic setting, and simultaneously breathing life into the historic tradition of Provincetown as a center for visual arts and writing, the Fine Arts Work Center began as a set of balancing acts. On the one hand, it would have a national and even international outlook with the Fellows it brought in; on the other hand, it would focus on the local. There would be visual arts, and there would be verbal arts. And there was a balancing act in terms of finances as well: at the outset, the organization had extremely limited resources with which to set up the structure and scaffolding it would require to achieve its multipronged vision.

While there is no consensus as to specifically who it was that first imagined an artist fellowship and residency program in Provincetown—and there are still arguments today regarding this matter—it was clear to a number of Provincetown’s artists, writers, and supporters that something had to be done to rekindle the flame of the country’s most famous artists’ colony before that flame burned out.

By the mid-1960s, the economy in Provincetown had sagged badly, which affected the art-buying public, established artists, and younger artists, who were all struggling to make ends meet. While the legendary space and freedom and the ideal light-to-paint-by that engendered the art colony in the first place were still intrinsic to Provincetown, practical conditions for living in town were anything but ideal. Provincetown was no longer economically viable for most artists and writers. There was a pervasive sense that Provincetown as an important arts community was on its way out.

A Romantic Notion

PROVINCETOWN ARTISTS and their supporters, some of them year-round residents and some seasonal residents, began to meet to discuss the situation and try to hash out strategies to ameliorate the crisis,

among them visual artists Fritz Bultman, Jim Forsberg, Robert Motherwell, Jack Tworokv, Richard Florsheim, Myron Stout, Salvatore Del Deo, and Philip Malicoat; poets Stanley Kunitz and Alan Dugan; and art patrons and supporters Hudson Walker, Munro Moore, Josephine Del Deo, and Ernest Vanderburgh. Other residents were involved as well, both from the arts community and from the general citizenry of Provincetown. These were the people who conceptualized the new institution over a period of several years, who brought it into the world, and who guided it during its early formative years.

“One of the aspects of life at the Fine Arts Work Center that I always appreciated was that writing and visual Fellows were part of the same community. In my life, these two disciplines have always had a huge impact on one another. Watching the progress of visual work taking shape was inspirational to me and often echoed a question I’d had about my writing. Broadening my understanding of all the arts deepened my connection to my own work.”

— Ellen Wittlinger, Writing Fellow, 1974–75, 1975–76

A number of ideas were put forward at these meetings, many of them having to do with establishing some sort of school in Provincetown that would focus on the arts and operate during the town’s off-season. This seemed to many an attractive idea because there was a sense that state funding for an educational project would be readily available, and funding for whatever idea was settled upon was bound to be the crucial issue.

In a report written in 1969, painter Jim Forsberg, another of the Work Center’s founders, talked about the origins and background of the FAWC: “The Fine Arts Work Center of Provincetown began a long time ago. It really began as an idea—an idea shared by many people over a long period of time—an idea for some kind of school in Provincetown in the winter. The idea usually was on an ideal rather than a practical basis. Oftentimes, it was simply a romantic notion. Whatever the energy behind these former notions, nothing came of them until much later.”

Eventually the discussions and meetings became centered at the Provincetown Art Association, which was natural enough, as the Art Association was the central arts organization in town, and virtually every artist and supporter of the arts was a member of it. The governing

“This perhaps unique project grew out of need and experience. The art colony needed more young artists, and they needed the colony. High summer resort rents had been pushing them out in the summer for several years. They tried to come for the winter—and seasonal unemployment generally stopped them. The town also needed the young artists, especially in winter when every new-comer brings income to somebody with a room to rent—and who hasn’t one,



Installation shot from the *Founders* show with works by (from left) Salvatore Del Deo, Gilbert Franklin, Robert Motherwell Marsden Hartley, and Ione Gaul Walker PHOTO BY NAYA BRICHER

in a resort town?—or a lunch counter. The obvious thing to do, then, was to attract more artists to town in the winter when rents are low but there are still many colleagues around. . . . An idea began to grow: do for artists what internship does for physicians; start a new activity that would help the young artist to come and work uninterruptedly, and yet make available to him some of the leaders of his field. They do not want another school—they want to paint, write, do sculpture. But they like to touch base occasionally with someone they respect.”

— Ernest Vanderburgh, first Director of FAWC, American Artist, 1968

board of the Art Association was also concerned about the future of the arts in Provincetown, and had been discussing ways of expanding from a summer organization to one that operated year-round. But there was also resistance among several of the board members to ideas that would de-emphasize the core mission of the organization, which at that time was to exhibit work by, and provide related programs for, member visual artists in a noncommercial space.

It had become clear by 1967 that the concept of establishing a college campus in Provincetown, with the resources at hand, was simply not feasible. But discussions continued, and they evolved into other concepts. They focused on two different, and sometimes competing, ideas for a residency program, each of which had its passionate advocates. One idea was to provide support on a modest scale to artists who were already in town, to enable them to continue to live and work in Provincetown;

the other idea was to create a larger and more expansive program that would bring in artists from all over the country, and even other countries, infusing the local arts community with new energy and work.

At the same time, some of the founders of the Work Center—notably the writers in the group, led by Stanley Kunitz—felt strongly that the scope of the new organization must include the literary arts as well as visual arts. Provincetown, after all, had a history and tradition of writers that was nearly as long as the tradition of painters—beginning with Eugene O’Neill, whose theater opened in Provincetown in 1916, his contemporaries Mary Heaton Vorse, John Dos Passos, and John Reed, and writers such as Tennessee Williams and Norman Mailer. Supporting playwrights with an actual theater would be prohibitively expensive for the fledgling organization, but certainly poets and fiction writers could be included.

The tensions in the discussions, many of which became heated, focused on the geographic scope of the project and on the artistic scope of the project: to support local artists or to support qualifying artists from all over, to support visual artists only or to expand the concept to include writers. In the end, it was decided that applications would be accepted from artists everywhere, but special consideration would be given to artists already working in Provincetown. And visual artists would be the initial Fellows, but writers would follow shortly thereafter.

It is important to note that there was no model on which to create a program like the Fine Arts Work Center, and that the founders of the FAWC were essentially making it up as they went along. They had already realized that it could not be a school—no classrooms, no dormitories, no teachers or students, no assignments, no grades. And they knew they didn’t want to create a typical artist residency program, like Yaddo or the MacDowell Colony, to which artists generally retreat in search of short-term solitude and isolation, usually for no more than a month at a time.

“It was a magical time for me. I was graduating from Yale with an MFA, completely in the dark as to what my next step would be. I had been living in Brooklyn for many years, but wanted a new life somewhere different, even for the short term. The Fellowship of the Fine Arts Work Center changed my life incredibly. Working alongside poets and writers was a new experience that enriched my own work extensively. I began to use narrative, both old and new, in my paintings, and it generated an odd and refreshing body of work that brought me to new places. It certainly was a result of associating with such smart and deeply thoughtful artists and writers. I am completely indebted to the Work Center for providing a place of unbounded creativity. I will never forget it. The landscape, the light, the freedom . . . and the time. Oh the endless time. It was magical.”

— Jason Mones, Visual Fellow, 2008–09

The idea that the originators of the Work Center came up with was very much a product of both its time and its place. It was to have the Fellows live not in isolation, as in most arts residency programs, but within the Provincetown community, and to have them here not for just a month but through the entire quiet season in town, for seven months from the beginning of October through the end of April. But it took a few years of discussion, haggling, and debate for the fledgling organization to morph into this model.

Scriptures

THE FOUNDER whose vision for the Work Center was most adhered to was Stanley Kunitz. He was most insistent on having a larger conception of the project, most insistent on opening applications to the world outside Provincetown, and most insistent on broadening the disciplines supported to include writers. A major American poet who had won the 1959 Pulitzer Prize for *Selected Poems: 1928–1958*, Kunitz had also long been an advocate for, and mentor to, younger poets, and in many ways the vision he had for the Work Center mirrored his longstanding personal commitment to nurturing young artists and combating the isolation in which they usually labored before their work gained recognition.

In my 1999 interview with Kunitz, we sat in the living room of his West End house to discuss what conditions for artists had been like in town in the 1960s. He was ninety-three years old at the time I interviewed him, still sharp, still wry, his memory for what had transpired still clear. After making his justifiably famous martinis—“First things first,” he said with a smile when I arrived—he reminisced.

“The period in the late ’60s was a difficult one in P-town. It was actually a period of acute depression in the town. It had lost its early luster as an arts community. The artists who were living here then were grumbling that it was a dying community, and the merchants were suffering. Property was practically worthless and the galleries were closing.”

In a 1993 article in *Provincetown Arts*, “Fine Arts Work Center: 25th Anniversary Collaborative Chronology,” Kunitz is quoted as saying, “We wrote our Scriptures early and we’ve kept to them. What I had in mind were my own early years as a writer, knowing no one, having no one to talk to. Like many young writers and painters, I felt I was working in the dark, that I needed, in addition to the simple time to work, some support from others around me. I vowed if I were ever in a position to do that, I would do what I could to create an exchange, a community of artists.”

He stated in his interview with me, “I talked about writing from the very beginning. But in the beginning I had no support. It was only after our struggling beginning, and the sense that we needed to widen our horizon, that others came and supported.”

At the conclusion of this interview, Stanley showed me around the lush garden that filled his front yard. He likened the profusion of blooms

“I think the relationship of the two different disciplines is crucial to the success of the Fine Arts Work Center. As a visual artist, you are exposed to a variety of diverse opinions from writers (poets and fiction) who bring a completely different voice to the process of making. Although writers may go through similar actions—drafts, rewrites, collaging—the way of looking at visual work is different, usually more analytical and, more often than not, insightful and surprising. The act of looking and the perceptions offered from this other discipline often allowed me to view my work afresh.”

— Bert Yarborough, Visual Fellow, 1976–77, 1977–78
Visual Committee Chair/Coordinator, 1979–83
Visual Committee Chair, 2008–18

to the proliferation of writers and artists in town, and pointed out to me, with obvious delight, his favorites among his carefully cultivated flowers, shrubs, and bushes. He tended his garden well. Until his death at age one hundred in 2006, Stanley Kunitz continued to be one of the guiding forces of the Fine Arts Work Center, remaining an active and involved member of the Writing Committee as well as the Board of Directors.

First Years

IN THE END, the Fine Arts Work Center did start its first season under the auspices of the Art Association, with a short session from March 4 to May 24, 1968. There were six Fellows, all of them painters, and four of them were already living in Provincetown when they applied. Though there were no actual classes, a “faculty” was listed that included Philip Malicoat, Henry Hensche, Karl Knaths (Honorary Member), and Jack Tworikov (Seminars in March), the latter being the head of the painting department at Yale University and a longtime Provincetown painter.

But resistance persisted within the Art Association to the notion of sponsoring the new off-season program, and on August 8, 1968, the membership voted not to amend its charter to permit an expansion of the stated mission, and the Art Association’s sponsorship of the program abruptly ended. A few days later, Hudson Walker, a Trustee of the Art Association who had been involved in the creation of the new program, and the individual who had been most generous in terms of funding it, suggested transferring its sponsorship wholesale to the American Federation of Arts (AFA).

The second session of the Fine Arts Work Center, now operating under the auspices of the AFA, ran from October 1, 1968, to May 1, 1969, with eleven visual artists, including three returnees from the first session. For this session, the first floor of a building that had previously been used as a music club known as the Blues Bag, at the corner of Bradford and Standish Streets, was rented to house the program. The Blues Bag building, though far from ideal, served the Work Center for three years.

It was in the third session, the 1969–70 program year, that writers were added. There were twenty-two visual Fellows and the first seven writing Fellows, with Stanley Kunitz serving as the first Writing Chairman. Poets Alan Dugan and Mary Oliver joined him on the new Writing Committee. Jim Forsberg was elected as the Art Chairman for the coming year.

In my interview with Judith Shahn, a painter and printmaker involved with the Work Center, and her husband, poet Alan Dugan, we talked about the work space in the Blues Bag during these early years. “There was a general studio where all the painters worked together,” Shahn remembered. “They didn’t have their own studios, they all painted in one large room. The office was in that building. There was a room upstairs where readings were held.” Dugan added, “And there was a

“The Fellowship from the Fine Arts Work Center was life-changing. I doubt I’d be a writer without it. I hadn’t published a thing when I got the Fellowship—the FAWC was the first (and much needed!) entity to ever support my work. And just the fact of knowing that the Work Center was choosing to give its time and space and resources to me, that its bet was that my work was worthy of its mission, well, that’s a gift that should be taken very, very seriously. Which is to say, I wrote my arse off while I was there. And being in the company of other artists and writers fueled that too—even when everyone was tucked away in their own private studios, there was a beehive feel to the place. You rise to the occasion and put the time in, because all these wonderful interesting people around you are also putting the time in.”

— Sophie McManus, Writing Fellow, 2008–09, 2009–10



(above, from left) Jim Peters, Larry Shainberg, Michael Mazur, Roger Skillings, Gail Mazur, Hatty Fitts, Stephen Mindich, Marty Davis, and Clarence Walker (with a painting by Polly Burnell) (facing page) The Fine Arts Work Center Fellows with friends and family in 1975

bar across the street where we met. . . . The Foc's'le. That's where the committees would go."

Seed money for the program was advanced from the AFA in the form of a loan, and the Work Center was in no position to repay loans. Shahn recalled, "We started out being funded by a loan from the American Federation of Arts that Hudson Walker secured. And that was \$40,000. I don't know if it ever got repaid or not."

Art patron Hudson Walker continued to provide critical support to the organization with his own funds, and with funds from his family's foundation in Minneapolis. His philanthropy was genuine and came with no strings attached. As Kunitz recalled, "Huddy provided the funding. He wanted to be a practical and financial aid to the program. And he thought that artists were the ones who should formulate the program."

Ruth Hiebert, who served as Executive Secretary of the Fine Arts Work Center beginning in 1969, and who was involved in keeping the books and monitoring the cash flow, reiterated the same feeling about Walker's crucial role, stating, "There would have been no Center without him."

Hudson Walker continued to support the FAWC until his death in 1977. His daughter Berta Walker, who has served as both Director of the Work Center and Chairman of the Board, recalled in my interview with her, "His psyche was such that he was like the silent mayor of the art world. He was involved in making things happen for the good of the community and the good of each and every individual involved."

Walker changed his will when he was in the hospital at the end of his life to bequeath a painting called *Give Us This Day* by Marsden Hartley to the Work Center to help endow the organization. The FAWC was able to sell the painting, and the proceeds became some of the original endowment money.

Money continued to be a thorny issue, both money to keep the FAWC afloat and money to help Fellows make their own personal ends meet. The Work Center Board's meeting minutes from 1968 to 1970 are dominated by discussions of money, often regarding what seem today like comically insignificant amounts.

Along with Hudson Walker's contributions, art patron Munro Moore's increased involvement in the governing and operation of the Work Center was critical. Like Walker he was not an artist himself, but he had supported the arts and other causes in Provincetown for years. Following a stint as Clerk and Treasurer of the FAWC, he became its President, and he maintained that role for more than ten years.

Roger Skillings said, "Munro had his hand in everything. He was one of those can-do American types: 'Whatever it is, I can do it.' He was in town government, and he was on all these committees. Munro became absolutely the central figure of the practical operations. There was nothing he didn't attend to. You couldn't ask too much of Munro."

In the summer of 1970, the Fine Arts Work Center received its first

grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in the amount of \$10,000. This was a huge boost to the program, though the overall financial situation was still dire. The AFA, which had fronted \$24,500 to the program the previous year, was having its own financial problems and could no longer be counted on for support. Moreover, they were making inquiries to the Work Center about when it would be able to start paying back its loans.

Kunitz pointed out at a meeting that summer that the expenses for a program like the one they had created were minimal. There was no existing program in the country that did so much for so little. Generous contributions by the staff of time and energy made possible a program in which almost all money was given directly to the Fellows. "And at this moment, we are either to survive or perish," he concluded.

Artists, writers, and supporters attending this meeting—including Stanley Kunitz, Robert Motherwell, B. H. (Bob) Friedman, Fritz Bultman, Myron Stout, Hudson Walker, and others—pledged their financial support.

Cutting the Cord

IN APRIL 1971 the Fine Arts Work Center submitted a proposal to the American Federation of Arts to guarantee support of the program for the next five years. The request was for \$60,000 annually in operating funds. The proposal outlined the goals of the FAWC, its programs, its financial situation, and its needs.

The American Federation of Arts turned down the Work Center's proposal. So after a three-year affiliation with the AFA, following the less than one-year affiliation with the Provincetown Art Association, the Fine Arts Work Center finally struck out on its own. On August 10, 1971, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts issued articles of incorporation to the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Inc., legally establishing it as a nonprofit corporation formed by nine individuals: Hudson Walker (President), Munro Moore (Treasurer), Suzanne Sinaiko, Arlie Sinaiko,

"I was a writing Fellow for two years and administered the Fellowship for nine. Of the thousand ways the art-making culture of the town and of the Fine Arts Work Center, especially of the visual arts Fellows, changed the way I live, here's one. Early on as a Fellow, I realized that some of the visuals were putting in sixteen-hour studio days. These were not manic episodes but sustained practices of concentration from which they emerged stinking and oddly calm. The possibility of staying inside a piece of work for so long at a go made me wild with envy and impatient with my previous notions of how long I could keep writing. It extended the volume of reflective space I could imagine occupying. The two sides of the Fellowship (writing and visual arts) are irreducibly unlike one another. That unlikeness makes possible the spark of change that so often makes the Work Center Fellowship so transformative."

— Salvatore Scibona, Writing Fellow, 2001–02, 2002–03
Writing Committee Coordinator, 2004–13

Myron Stout, Stanley Kunitz, Jim Forsberg, Fritz Bultman, and Elizabeth Patrick. (The Sinaikos were supporters of the arts in Provincetown, and Patrick was the incoming Executive Secretary of the Work Center.)

The first year of its independence was a watershed year for the Fine Arts Work Center in another way as well. In 1972, the FAWC acquired its first piece of property, the Days Lumberyard facility at 24 Pearl Street. The establishment of a permanent home had been discussed since before the Work Center even began. A core piece of the mission was to have artists and writers living together in a community setting, at least partly so that they might nurture and stimulate one another in their work, and

“Of the founders, Stanley Kunitz had the largest, steadiest vision of the Fine Arts Work Center and what it ought to be. He fought hard for it, especially during the long birth throes, when everything was always in question and the future was threatened by an endemic parochialism. Often lonely, adept at committee steering, with many helpful friends in the worlds of poetry and art, he never spoke a word of despair or doubt, always knew the way was upwards, despite frequent contrary appearances and the skepticism of outsiders. He was the most eloquent, the surest and wildest, the most respected and fearless, the strongest. He had the widest experience and deepest optimism, and his spirit impregnated the place.” — Roger Skillings, from *“Early Days at the Fine Arts Work Center,”* Provincetown Arts, August 1986

this was not really possible when Fellows were scattered through town in their own apartments. Money, of course, had been the stumbling block, but this time when an opportunity presented itself, the Work Center—no longer financially intertwined with any other organization—moved forward.

The rambling buildings on Pearl Street, with ten artists’ studios on the second floor of the longer building, above the lumberyard offices and storage rooms, plus a three-story barn building and separate coal storage bins, had a long and illustrious history in the annals of Provincetown’s arts heritage. Among others, the two most renowned art teachers in Provincetown’s history, Charles Hawthorne and Hans Hofmann—along with many of their students—had lived and/or worked in the Days studios. In fact, Hofmann had more than once conducted his summer art school there. A list of those who painted in the Days facility beginning in 1914 includes Edwin Dickinson, Charles Demuth, Ross Moffett, Bruce McKain, Lillian Orlowsky, Philip Malicoat, Robert Motherwell, Helen Frankenthaler, Robert De Niro, Ed Corbett, Jan Müller, Peter Busa, Myron Stout, and Fritz Bultman.

The cost of the property, sold to the Work Center by town resident Joe Oliver, was a very reasonable \$120,000. The purchase was made possible by a long-term, low-interest loan from the Walker Foundation. Once more, Hudson Walker had stepped forward to ensure the FAWC’s future.

The independent status of the organization, and the new home, solidified the Fine Arts Work Center, although it did not make its financial troubles disappear. Roger Skillings recalled, “It changed things vastly, obviously. The old living around town disappeared. We had this enormous piece of property, which suddenly increased our expenses vastly. We had to have warm rooms, and our heating bill was terrifying—all the burdens of property along with all the advantages.”

In the long run, the advantages of acquiring the property far outweighed the burdens, and the Work Center used its new situation to strengthen its programs and catapult itself into the future. The basic program was transformed from a Fellowship program to one that now included both a seven-month Fellowship and a seven-month Residency for artists and writers. A gallery to show work by Fellows was created out of the lumberyard’s plumbing-and-heating supply room—now the Hudson D. Walker Gallery. The Work Center converted the coal storage bins into yet more artist work spaces, and made a common room for Fellows as well.

When my family arrived in Provincetown in October 1975 for my first year as a Fellow, we were assigned the bottom floor of the barn as our home. This was the largest space the Work Center had to offer, which went to us because we had two children (there were no other children at the Work Center that year). Most of the living and work spaces were one-room studios, but ours had two small bedrooms in addition to the living room and kitchen areas. In addition to the free apartment, we had my Fellowship stipend to live on—that year, the stipend came to fifty dollars per month. The living space, though the largest at the Work Center, was tight with four people in it, and the money was even tighter for four people to live on, but it nevertheless seemed like nothing less than a spectacular gift that I continue, decades later, to be grateful for.



“At the Fine Arts Work Center, my eyes were opened to the work of the Fellows who were painters or installation artists. I was an artist who ‘engineered’ my sculptures through sketches and scripted methods, and I envied the fluidity of paint, the change that took place in the work of these artists in a matter of minutes. I started to draw freely for drawing’s sake on a large scale. Three-dimensional possibilities opened up in my drawings. My sculptures were made without plan, then deconstructed and reconfigured.”

The FAWC Fellowship year was pivotal, and gave me ‘permission’ to grow as an artist. We writers and artists also made impromptu plans, where to grab a beer and a game of pool at the end of the day. It is significant that now, thirty years later, I am involved in a poetry and sculpture collaboration with Alison Deming, a former FAWC poetry Fellow. We are sharing our collaboration in an exhibition this summer, Breath and Matter, at the Boston Sculptors Gallery.”

— Susan Lyman, Visual Fellow, 1981–82

Nancy and I quickly set up work spaces in the apartment—mine to write, hers to paint—and our interactions with the other Fellows were regular, and mostly informal. Three visual artists lived upstairs from us in the barn and they became friends—and also helped us out with babysitting. And across the parking lot, in the ten studios above the office and the common room, the rest of the visual Fellows and most of the writing Fellows lived. We talked about writing and art, and I exchanged work with other writing Fellows. Once a week, on Friday night, we all had a communal dinner together in the common room, open not only to the Fellows but to anyone involved with the community.



Installation shot from the *Founders* show with works on the left wall by Myron Stout and on the right wall by Philip Malicoat PHOTO BY NAYA BRICHER

“Before my residency, I knew what it was like to support myself financially, and understood my art practice as something that happened in the time I had after my money-work time. Once you get into the FAWC rhythm, you can’t go back, because you’ve seen what it’s like to live it. Living it, on a perilous spit of land, clams in your gut, sand in your shoes, making art next to nine other artists and ten writers . . . the FAWC teaches you that you can build that for yourself wherever you land.” — Jarrod Beck, Visual Fellow, 2011–12, 2013–14

The mixing of visual artists and writers in the living spaces and in informal activities encouraged interactions, and these interactions stimulated a broadening of artistic concerns. This frequently manifested itself in the creative work, and over the course of seven months I could see how the work of some of the Fellows, including my own, was growing.

Stability and Evolution

THOUGH ISSUES CERTAINLY remained, and financial impediments continued to raise themselves, the organization was now afloat. It was independent. It had a home that would enable it to achieve its vision of young writers and young visual artists working and interacting and living side by side, as members of the same community. It was viable.

The number of Fellows fluctuated over the first several years, to some extent according to available funds, and so did the balance among the number of Fellows in the visual and the literary sides. In the 1972–73 season, the Work Center admitted ten visual Fellows and ten writing Fellows, and that has been the pattern, with a couple of rare exceptions, ever since. This was critical in making the two halves of the program feel equal, and again it encouraged a spirit of intermixing among the various disciplines.

Less than five years went by from the time the Fine Arts Work Center offered its first modest Fellowships in 1968 to the time it moved into its own facility as an independent organization in 1972. There was a very rapid evolution from an entity conceived in response to a crisis in the local arts community to an important arts institution with a national focus.

Since 1972, the FAWC has evolved and changed in numerous ways. A summer arts educational program has been added, with dozens of weekly courses offered each summer, and now this program has become one of the preeminent centers for summer art and writing classes in the country. The Summer Program is open to anyone who wants to take a course, and it includes regular artist talks and readings that are open to the general public. The advent of the Summer Program expanded the Work Center into a year-round operation.

While the shape and structure of the original lumberyard buildings remain intact, all the studios and apartments within them have been

upgraded, and the infrastructure has been modernized. In addition, a number of new properties have been acquired by the FAWC for use by its artists and writers, both immediately surrounding 24 Pearl Street and elsewhere in Provincetown.

The financial situation of the Work Center has become more stable over time, through the contributions of donors and the efforts of a succession of directors and staff. While fund-raising is still a priority each year, the FAWC is also able to plan for and implement its growth and new endeavors. The success that Fellows have had in the worlds of art and literature has greatly enhanced the Work Center’s prominence and, in turn, has made the Work Center more appealing for donors and foundations. The beneficiaries of all this are the current and future Fellows, who are able to receive Fellowships to support their early careers and to work in amenable facilities.

Despite the evolutionary changes, the core focus of the Fine Arts Work Center remains the same—to support and nurture emerging artists who show unusual ability and promise, and who are in the critical early stages of their careers; to create an active community of artists and writers, which changes each year as new Fellows come in, yet retains its essential character; and to enliven and enrich Provincetown and the Lower Cape.

In its first fifty years, some eight hundred Fellows have been in residence at the Fine Arts Work Center, over two hundred of them for two sessions and nearly six hundred for one session. Many have stayed on in Provincetown and Truro and Wellfleet after their Fellowships ended and continued their careers on the Lower Cape. Work Center Fellows have created significant works of art and literature, and they have won widespread recognition for their work, including hundreds of awards and prizes: nearly fifty Guggenheim Fellowships, eight Pulitzer Prizes, National Book Awards, the Rome Prize in Painting, American Academy of Arts and Letters Awards in both visual arts and literature, O. Henry Awards, selection in *The Best American Short Stories* anthology, Fellowships at the American Academy in Rome, Fulbright Fellowships, the Governor General’s Literary Award in Canada, Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grants, Whiting Awards, awards from numerous state arts agencies in visual arts and writing, and other awards and prizes far too numerous to list.

In 1971, one of the Work Center’s founders, Jim Forsberg, penned the line, “The Fine Arts Work Center is an adventure in hopefulness.” What started out as a bare-bones project to nurture emerging artists and writers and to revitalize the art scene in Provincetown has evolved into a sustainable project with the same spirit and mission. Building on the vision of the Work Center’s founders, and on the history of its first fifty years of operation, the hopefulness is as true today as it was then. 📌

BEN BROOKS was a writing Fellow at the FAWC in 1975–76 and 1976–77. He is the author of The Icebox (a novel) and over eighty published short stories, including winners of an O. Henry Award and a Nelson Algren Literary Award. He is a Senior Writer-in-Residence at Emerson College in Boston, and lives with his wife, Nancy, in Somerville, Massachusetts, and in Truro.

FAWC at 50

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

By Michael Roberts

MY FIVE AND A HALF years as Executive Director of the Fine Arts Work Center have brought a growing respect and gratitude for what Hunter O'Hanian and Margaret Murphy did to perpetuate and extend the vision of the founders. In his history of the first thirty years of the Work Center, also featured in these pages, Ben Brooks shows how that group aimed to build an institution in which emerging artistic talent could grow and mature while sustaining the town's historical importance to the evolution of art and literature in America. While the last twenty years have been as precarious and difficult as the first three decades, the following conversations demonstrate that they have also been marked by repeated triumphs over adversity. The constant has been the unfailing promise of the Fellows.

The Fine Arts Work Center begins its second half-century in the same spirit of hope amid challenge that has been present from the beginning. Successive Directors have worked to keep the most gifted young artists and writers coming to this beautiful, weather-beaten strip of land where creativity somehow thrives with just the right mix of community and inclemency. The challenges have included perpetual financial struggles, dilapidated buildings, and the town's gradual evolution from declining fishing village to high-end resort unaffordable to all but the most affluent.

Today, we face exactly the same challenges. As before, we move forward with conviction that artistic talent requires early nurturance—"time, place, and community"—and that inspiration can invigorate not just an individual but also a town, and even a nation. But, as always, an essential ingredient continues to be the spiritual and material generosity of lay supporters, who recognize that the arts enrich human life, and that without them we cannot flourish.

We move forward with a confidence inspired by the Work Center's remarkable roster of past Fellows together with a growing body of increasingly generous donors. The 50th Anniversary Campaign now under way will ensure our capacity to build on the success and promise of all that has come before.



Michael Roberts

PHOTO BY JAY CORCORAN

A CONVERSATION WITH HUNTER O'HANIAN

(Executive Director 1996–2007)

MICHAEL ROBERTS: *I think it's fair to say you brought FAWC back from the brink and added many needed improvements. Were there times when you wondered if FAWC would survive?*

HUNTER O'HANIAN: We really did worry about survival. Before I became Director, I served on the Board and attended the weekly Executive Committee meetings. My fellow committee members were the likes of Gil Franklin, Bill Webb, Roger Skillings, Judy Shahn, Napi Van Dereck, Hatty Walker Fitts, and Pat de Groot. These were amazing people.

Money was the critical issue. The full Board had voted to reduce the number of Fellows from twenty to sixteen, and it was widely believed that the four lost Fellowships would never be replaced. I remember those meetings were pretty grim. Someone would slide the oil or electric bill across the table, and then the most recent bank statement, and there wasn't enough to cover the most basic utilities, much less anything else. It was always hand to mouth in those days. Yet we brought back the lost Fellowships, almost doubled the Fellows' stipends, raised the money necessary to create robust jury processes and visiting artist programs, and provided the visual arts and writing coordinators with a living wage and benefits.

All this was possible because these people believed in the Fellowship program and its remarkable achievements and promise. Once I became Director, I said that we were going to reinvest in the Fellowships in an incremental way, and people went along and made contributions. Mike Mazur, Hatty Fitts, Marty Davis, Stanley Kunitz, and Roger Skillings were major supporters. I called them the "Modern Thinkers." They did all they could to help us financially, and we could not have survived without them.



PHOTO BY SARA LONDON

Hunter O'Hanian with Stanley Kunitz

MR: In your ten-year tenure at FAWC, your tangible legacy includes the addition of the "Link" with its new art studios and the purchase of the Reeves Euler Building on Brewster Street. And yet your first advice to me in 2013 was, "Stay away from the temptation of real estate!" Talk about the complexities of real estate in a place like P'town.

HO: Real estate is very seductive in Provincetown. I think people talk about it more than they talk about sex. I learned that the Work Center had a lot of property that it couldn't afford to maintain—seven buildings, twenty apartments, ten studios, art-making facilities, etc. There were failing septic tanks, ancient heating systems, inadequate means of egress. You name it. But when the Reeves Euler Building came on the market, there was instant determination on the part of the Board to buy the building outright—with no mortgage. With the support of some true visionaries, it came to FAWC. By then, the Summer Program was cooking and we were growing. The new space allowed us to house all the Fellows, Summer Workshop students, and even some staff. It just made sense for this to be a part of the campus. We expanded even further with the units at Meadow Road—five more living and working spaces. Those were all donated to us as well.

Then prices in Provincetown really went crazy. Unless people were willing to donate all the funds needed for maintenance as well as purchase, we could not afford more. So we turned instead to adding to our core campus. "The Link," joining the original Days Lumberyard building to the Stanley Kunitz Common Room, was the logical, inevitable addition.

MR: You built the Summer Program into a major arts educational initiative, gathering a nationally renowned faculty, bringing hundreds of artists and writers to town every summer, and creating by far our largest source of earned income. What were the biggest challenges of accomplishing this?

HO: The idea was Fred Leebron's. It had been in operation for one year before I got there, with about 200 students over the entire summer. By the time I left, there were over 1,200 students over the summer. While I certainly had my hand in shaping its direction, the work of Melanie Braverman and, later, Dorothy Antczak cannot be overemphasized. While it was hard work, the path was clear and the support of Board members was great. People called in favors and got their friends to come and teach for virtually nothing. We tried to offer a program that was rigorous but also allowed for the creation of the sort of community that all artists need. I watch what Kelle Groom is doing now, and I am a big fan.

MR: You brought one of the first low-residency MFAs in visual arts to FAWC in association with MassArt. Talk about the relationship of graduate arts education

to a residency program like FAWC's and whether—and how—they might again coexist in a mutually fruitful way.

HO: This was one of my proudest professional achievements. Its cancellation in 2014 broke my heart, and I still hope we may find a way to revive it in some form, perhaps with another institution. Launching it was a lot of work, but everyone involved really wanted it to succeed. Former MassArt President Kay Sloan, Provost Joanna Branson, and Graduate Dean George Creamer had faith that together we could create the first graduate program on Cape Cod, and that we were building a valuable partnership. Barbara Baker was a stalwart in managing a thousand details. It almost didn't happen because there were those who felt that we should have no accredited education on the FAWC campus. There was concern that it would weaken the Fellowship program. We lost valued trustees over this issue. But we put the program together and ran it for seven years, bringing high-caliber education to scores of artists, many of whom are making great work today, teaching and pursuing productive artistic careers.

I was deeply disappointed when new leadership at MassArt chose to drop the program. I felt this was a failure of vision. From my current perspective, heading the College Art Association, I know that higher education in the arts is changing rapidly, and the models we know are shifting under our feet. Programs like the MassArt/FAWC program can absolutely continue to flourish, but the trick is to find visionaries with whom to partner! You need others who are in it for the right reasons.

MR: You had a close personal connection with several of the FAWC founders, many of whom are honored in this year's 50th Celebration. Can you share any anecdotes about these now somewhat legendary folks?

HO: I get emotional when I think about some of the smart, generous, talented people I had the privilege to work with at FAWC. It was an experience like no other. I've mentioned some of these people before—Hatty Fitts, Mike Mazur, Gil Franklin, Stanley Kunitz. These were exceptional, humane individuals who understood the organization's mission and its impact on society and were determined that FAWC should survive. They were not in it for themselves.

I remember the personal time we spent together. I had many dinners with Gil and Joyce Franklin at their home in Wellfleet. I gossiped and planned with Mike and Gail Mazur at Clem and Ursie's. I developed a taste for martinis at Stanley and Elise's. Oh my—I remember sitting in their front parlor and talking as a stream of literary and artistic acolytes passed through: it was sublime. I stay involved today because I share their vision, but I also do it to honor them and their contributions.

MR: What are your hopes for FAWC's next fifty years?

HO: Only what they have always been: financial security and the recognition our organization deserves! The financial model is a difficult one. Imagine any other enterprise devoting its entire property for seven months of the year to a program that provides no income. FAWC has just five months to earn enough in other ways to allow it to survive for the entire year. This remains our greatest challenge. During Margaret Murphy's time, FAWC developed the Summer Awards Celebration with the attentive partnership of Danny Mullin. That, and other new fund-raisers, have been a great boon to the organization. I know that you've been able to attract new donors who have made a real difference.

I also want the larger world of arts and letters to recognize FAWC's achievements and its importance. Anyone touched by the organization knows its impact on emerging artists and writers, but we want others to know as well. FAWC deserves a seat at the table with other major merit-based awards and residency programs. FAWC belongs in the company of institutions like MacDowell and Yaddo. My hope for FAWC's second half-century is that its reputation will come to match its extraordinary achievements. ❧

REFLECTIONS FROM MARGARET MURPHY

(Executive Director 2007–2013)

MICHAEL ROBERTS: *You came to Provincetown long before you had any thought of heading FAWC. What were your impressions of the organization during those early years?*

MARGARET MURPHY: It was a poetry reading by Stanley Kunitz that first brought me to the Fine Arts Work Center. It was July 2004. I was spending the summer in the Bultman cottage on Miller Hill Road. Jeanne Bultman and her husband, Fritz, were among the FAWC founders, and Stanley was Jeanne's friend. Stanley was also a FAWC founder. In 2004 he was ninety-nine years old—he had been selected as US Poet Laureate when he was ninety-five.

I spent three summers in Jeanne's cottage and was taken by the mission and spirit of the Work Center and the charm and funkiness of Provincetown. Before I returned to NYC in the fall of 2006, I talked to Jeanne about living in Provincetown year-round. She gave me the very sound advice that I needed to have a "project" if I was going to do that. When the *Banner* published the news later that fall that Hunter had resigned, I thought, "Here's my project!"

I became Executive Director in May 2007. It was a leap of faith on both sides that worked out. My years at the Work Center were as important in my life as anything I've done, and I am grateful beyond words for being able to lead it for the nearly six years I did. My love for Provincetown brought me to the Work Center, and my devotion to the Work Center has kept me in Provincetown. I was recently elected President of the Work Center's Board.

MR: *What were the biggest challenges you encountered in your early years as Executive Director?*

MM: The main challenges in my early days at FAWC were to rebuild the Days Lumberyard building, which was on the verge of collapse, and to stabilize the financial situation, which wasn't a whole lot better. By the time I left, I had become FAWC's resident construction manager, not only rebuilding Days Lumberyard but funding major renovations of some of our other historic spaces. On the financial front, we had surplus budgets all six years of my tenure and, for the first time in the history of the organization, we were able to fund capital and operating reserve accounts. I worked hard and I took all of this to heart. It mattered a great deal to me.

MR: *Aside from financial concerns, what do you consider to be the most significant initiatives at this time?*

MM: What mattered to me the most was the flourishing of our core endeavor, the Fellowship program, during my years as Director. For all the hard work, the pleasure and the privilege was communing with the Fellows, young people of vast but unrecognized talent whose time at the Work Center was as precious a gift to them as their presence was to us.

During my years, we were able to increase the Fellows' monthly stipend. We opened the visual arts Fellowship to time-based media, and set new records annually for Fellowship applications. We received major funding for the visual Fellows from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. We inaugurated our annual report on the achievements of our Fellows, which continues to this day as a vital link in making the world aware of our accomplishments. We enhanced all of our visual arts programs with state-of-the-art improvements to our printmaking facility, including a ventilation system that makes our print shop one of the best in the region. We reinvigorated the Work Center's engagement locally through the funding of dozens of new Summer Workshop scholarships for Provincetown and Outer Cape residents. At the same time, we expanded the national and global reach of our creative writing workshops by designing and launching "24PearlStreet," our online writing program.



Margaret Murphy

PHOTO BY ROSE MURPHY

MR: *No review of the last ten years of FAWC's history could omit the crucial role played by the two new fund-raising initiatives of your time: the New York City benefit and the Summer Awards Celebration. How did these seemingly indispensable events on FAWC's annual calendar come about?*

MM: The Work Center would never have been able to accomplish so much during these years without the counsel and generosity of its trustees, friends, and supporters. When we were rebuilding the Days Lumberyard in 2009–10, I suggested that we celebrate its reopening with a party. Danny Mullin and Michael Fernon agreed to chair the event. We decided that in addition to the standard ticket, which was expensive enough, we'd offer \$2,500 premium tickets. I had no idea if we'd be able to sell any of those premium tickets, and I'll never forget my amazement and gratitude that so many devoted supporters of the Work Center purchased them. In an effort to extend the Work Center more into the community, the party honored the legacy of Provincetown and two of its most legendary figures, the poet Mary Oliver and the painter Anne Packard. The party was supposed to be a one-time affair to celebrate our new Days, but it was such a success we decided the very next morning to make it an annual event.

MR: *You have come back to FAWC, this time as President, at a moment of the greatest importance for us going forward, the start of our second half-century and a critical fund-raising effort. What are some of your hopes and aspirations for your time as President?*

MM: Of course, there is more to be done. The financial stability of the Work Center continues to be a challenge, year in and year out, making fund-raising a constant demand. But after fifty years, we know that creativity thrives at the Work Center, and that its mission is its own reward. Heading into its next fifty years, FAWC has embarked on a 50th Anniversary Campaign to sustain the vibrancy of its programs, improve its historic spaces, increase its Fellows' stipends, and enhance its contributions to the vitality of the arts in Provincetown. Everything that we've always wanted to do, and then some!

These supreme achievements also occurred during my years at FAWC: National Book Awards in Fiction to former Fellows Denis Johnson (*Tree of Smoke*, 2007) and Jaimy Gordon (*Lord of Misrule*, 2010), a 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction to former Fellow Paul Harding (*Tinkers*, 2009), selection of former Fellow Ellen Gallagher for the 2010 Whitney Biennial, Guggenheim Fellowships in fiction, poetry, and fine arts to a total of eleven of our former FAWC Fellows, and numerous additional Fellows' accolades. In the words of former Fellow Ann Patchett, the Work Center handed them the lifeline, and years later someone else handed them the laurel. 📖

Lauren Ewing's Incredible Vision

THE PROVINCETOWN AIDS MEMORIAL

By Deborah Minsky



IT IS DIFFICULT TO FATHOM the complexity of Lauren Ewing's sculptural vision for the Provincetown AIDS Memorial, but, fortunately, Ewing is as gifted verbally as she is artistically. Referring to a kind of cross-pollination between sculpture and writing, evidenced by a summer class she recently taught at the Fine Arts Work Center, she said, "I am and always will be fascinated with the endless elasticity of language and its centrality to human cultures. It is this interest that made me comfortable with the challenge of texting the stone." She added that she knew that the words, the story, were already out there, and it was her job to preserve them on the AIDS Memorial. This elegy in stone is evidence of her efforts, and her account of this journey is fascinating to hear, down to the very last technical and aesthetic details.

When I interviewed Ewing about the origin of her piece, she said that a number of people asked her to submit her plans for the monument soon after the Provincetown Cultural Council put out its request for proposals. But she had some doubts: "I did not think mine would be successful because it was not a traditional, vertical memorial." However, believing that the memorial should be about "openness and endurance, not triumph," she quashed her misgivings and followed her own desire to "equate a fleeting ocean moment with the uniqueness and temporal nature of human life."

Since coming to Provincetown and living at the water's edge, Ewing has grown to appreciate the changing surface of the bay and its "infinite, startling beauty." She is also intensely aware of the love that everyone in Provincetown has for this extraordinarily beautiful, and vulnerable, place. "There is no substance or subject as big as water, an absolute essential in all life," she explained. "And waves, metaphorically and physically, are totally irresistible, overwhelming. Waves of creativity,

waves of enlightenment, waves of hatred and violence, waves of environmental destruction, and now waves of awareness are needed to stem the enormous hand of humanity if we are to exist peacefully on this earth with each other and God's other creatures."

In choosing the ocean as her inspirational metaphor, Ewing wanted to create something that belongs to everyone, something that would be a permanent and maybe much-loved part of the community: "I wanted to make something that was beautiful and could endure for this town, which has set an example of human compassion." After a nationwide search, the selection committee unanimously chose her design for Provincetown's long-sought AIDS Memorial.

From the very start, Ewing knew she would be utilizing computer numerical controlled (CNC) stone-milling technology that she has worked with for the last fifteen years in conjunction with the Digital Stone Project, an organization she helped found. Her process is a blending of centuries-old, "traditional" hands-on sculpting, a la Michelangelo,

This powerful inscription is key to understanding Ewing's goal for her piece:

The Provincetown AIDS Memorial is a horizontal monument, a unique moment in the living ocean. This memorial is a reminder of the lives lost to AIDS and the humanitarian achievements of the caregivers who responded to the crisis. It is also a reminder of those who are still fighting to live and the continuing impact of AIDS in communities worldwide. Provincetown was a first responder to the crisis in this country. In 1983 the Provincetown AIDS Support Group opened its doors to hundreds of people living with AIDS who came here seeking assistance and treatment. Here they found open minds, big hearts and an interest in their well being. Provincetown's commitment to being a caring community continues today.



PHOTO BY CHERIE MITTENTHAL

(above and facing page) The monument being installed on May 22, 2018



(above) A view of the installed monument showing the poetry inscription
(below) Three views of the surface of the waves: (left) the milling machine texture before refinement, (middle and right) the finished surface

The poetry inscription:

Steve's / holding Jerry, though he's already gone, / Marie holding John, gone,
Maggie holding / her John, gone, Carlos and Darren / holding another Michael,
gone, and I'm holding Wally, who's going. * Transcendence might be the term
Emerson would lend it. / What I'm trying to say is that it wasn't lonely.

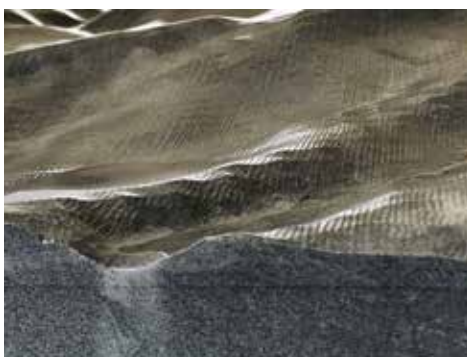
* Look: I am building absence / out of this room's air * We are all made of /
our own people laying names on the ground * Most of it happened without music,
the clink of the spoon from the kitchen, / someone talking, somebody
sleeping / Someone watching somebody sleep.

with the latest twenty-first century use of precisely computerized robots, programmed with 3-D files to mill her vision of an ocean moment. She said, "I have literally hundreds of images of the surface of the water, in all states, from calm to rolling waves. I want an active but not dramatic amount of wave action. I want the everyday, common water surface that everyone knows and will recognize as a normative state."

Hers was a massive undertaking, involving long stays in Italy, first shopping for stone and then working closely with a highly skilled stone expert, Marco Lombardi. Even deciding on just the right stone was complicated. Provincetown is a harsh marine environment with salt air and extremes in temperature, so they could not use marble (too soft)

or granite, which has a visible crystalline structure that does not say "flow." They decided on a twenty-ton piece of Brazilian quartzite, a very hard stone, 40 percent micro-quartz, with an even grain that would not interfere with the pattern of waves or the text on the sides. This piece was then cut into two identical blocks for a total finish size of 3 feet high by 9 feet wide by 9 feet long.

Cutting out the blocks was just the beginning of a painstaking process. These halves were then transported to a stone-milling facility in Tuscany, Garfagnana Innovazione, which was equipped with the requisite milling machines and robots. A huge saw kerfed the sides (a "kerf" is a slit or notch made in the stone) so they could be smoothed to the



PHOTOS BY LAUREN EWING



PHOTO BY LAUREN EWING

Igor Basisi at work



Marco Lombardi and Lauren Ewing

right finish dimension. The CNC machines ran all day long, seven days a week, to mill the top of the blocks into a finer and finer topography that realistically depicts waves. After this initial milling, two different texts, the single verb “remembering” and a longer narrative inscription, were engraved into the sides. Ewing worked with poets Marie Howe and Michael Klein on selecting the poetic inscriptions from the works of five poets to be part of the final piece, including “Atlantis” by Mark Doty, “R.I.P. My Love” by Tory Dent (1958–2005), “Drawing from Life” by Reginald Shepherd (1963–2008), “Naming the Elements” by Michael Klein, and “Without Music” by Marie Howe. A bronze plaque will be installed on the foundation listing each poem inscribed on the AIDS Memorial by title and author.

Ewing explained that finishing the surface of her piece requires lots of hand-grinding with stone and diamond pneumatic tools. She mentioned being fortunate to work with Igor Basisi, an expert stone finisher, and detailed the demands of his task: “It is cold, wet, laborious work that is hard on the back and the ears. Honing, a few steps short of polishing, requires a strict method of working up through levels of grit abrasives until a diamond finishing pad is used to remove all traces of tooling.” She further explained that honing differs from polishing: it is subtle and lets light play on the surface without creating glare, while polishing creates a shiny surface that reflects light back on the eyes.

The next step in the process is water testing, making sure that the surface is slightly domed so that water won’t pool on the surface. Ewing said this step involves the work of people with differing expertise as well as machines with different physical capabilities. She added, “In the

end, it has to be what I call ‘spherical thinking,’ to think the whole of something from idea to object. It requires much contemplation, physical awareness, human cooperation, and mutual respect between animate beings and inanimate materials.” In detailing key steps in the arduous milling process, Ewing emphasized the crucial element of joint endeavor: “Large-scale sculpture is a production that requires collaboration between many people—it all takes place in the real world, the physical world that we still need to honor and understand even while everyone is held in fascination with the miniature images of screen time. Sculpture is ‘in touch,’ and that is my enduring attraction to it.”

Ewing returned to Italy in early March to work out final finishing techniques. She explained that at this point, once her expectations were understood and technical processes were decided on, she was no longer needed: “My labor is not as good as the *artigiani/artigiane* who are experts in their craft. I know what I want and what the piece needs; after the method for arriving at that has been worked out, they take over—the whole process is known to me and very satisfying.”

However, there were still some logistical concerns. One worry has been the value of the dollar, which has dropped 20 percent against the euro since she first proposed her piece. As a side note to this anxiety, Ewing described her stay in Amsterdam, where she was working simultaneously on an installation for the city’s Light Festival. During a visit to Rembrandt’s house, she learned that at the height of his creative powers he had been bankrupt and his house was seized. He finished his life in a small apartment. “Our passions and our finances are not always in sync,” she said. “Being in control of *all* circumstances is not always possible.”

For Ewing the real drama, the intense worries, came after the memorial was finished. “Dropping one of the pieces would have been a catastrophe,” she said, “and as they are a matched pair we would have had to start all over again.” Once these massive treasures were moved from the stone-working facility, crated, put in a container, loaded onto a ship, and transported across the ocean, their journey was still not complete. Upon arrival in the States, they were then taken off the ship by cranes, lifted onto a truck, and brought to Provincetown. Try to envision that journey, especially the nerve-wracking crawl from the port to the Cross Bronx Expressway, and the excruciating leg along Route 95, moving toward the Mid-Cape Highway (Route 6). Finally, in Provincetown, the long-awaited AIDS Memorial was again lifted by crane and gently positioned on its foundation. Ewing noted that it takes patience and lots of cooperation to accomplish such a task.

The Provincetown AIDS Memorial was safely installed on Town Hall grounds on May 22, 2018. A dedication ceremony took place on June 16, 2018. The journey was complete.

WORKING ON ALL PHASES of the Provincetown AIDS Memorial has demanded a mind-bending marriage of art and technology as well as prodigious energy, optimism, and faith on the part of Ewing and her skilled team of stone workers. Throughout this arduous process, Ewing seemed totally enthralled, even blissful: “I am at one with my work in this brief time. I feel like a part of all humanity. I feel like water in sand, undifferentiated and totally immersed.”

Despite all the demands, technical difficulties and financial dangers, she has approached the project as an expression of complicated simplicity, as an embodiment of the sculpture’s own desires. Ewing’s art, from conception to design to creation, reflects a universal continuum of human history and social progress. And this memorial in particular reflects time and place, joy and despair. It captures the good and the bad of human enterprise. It reflects the universality of our condition. Ewing said she worked hard to bring this message into her stone: “Look at me, see me, read me, take me home in your mind.” In the end, this lasting memorial will also contain a piece of her spirit and her abiding love for her art. ▣

DEBORAH MINSKY has been a “summer native” in Provincetown since 1948 and moved here permanently in 2005 after she and her husband, Dennis, retired from teaching in New Jersey. She has written for the Provincetown Banner since 2001 and currently works part-time at Far Land Provisions.

Mark Adams and the Graphic Novel of Evolutionary Time

By Christopher Busa

THE TITLE OF Mark Adams's mid-career exhibition last fall at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum (PAAM), *Expedition*, aptly embodies the experience of the viewers—a feeling of many events happening simultaneously, a tangible sense of invisible forces, including the weight of gravity, and an elastic sense of very slow geological time contrasted with sudden movement, such as the swerve in the flight of a flock of birds. Curated by Breon Dunigan and Joe Fiorello, this novel installation acutely divided the museum's physical space into three conceptual perspectives: the floor, the walls, and an inner sanctum sanctorum, a rough-hewn wooden replica of the cabin occupied by Charles Darwin during the five years he sailed as a naturalist on the British exploratory vessel HMS *Beagle*.

This exhibit gave a fascinating look into the mind of a famous explorer confronting fresh adventures and making detailed records of his observations. Within his ten-by-eleven-foot cabin, Darwin slept and read, swaying in a hammock during long sea crossings. He studied charts spread open on his writing desk and kept warm with the insulation of over four hundred thick volumes on biology, plants, and animals, books that were also profusely illustrated with anatomical drawings. Considering that a primary purpose of the *Beagle* was to map the coastlines of continents across the globe, it is not surprising that Darwin's library also included books on global geography and the geological forces that created continents.

Adams used Darwin's cabin as a kind of control center for navigating the many stops during the expedition, as well as the locus for basic steps in understanding evolution. Upon entering Adams's simulated space, a visitor could almost feel Darwin's presence—indeed, I felt a certain reverence in viewing artifacts sitting on a shelf: scrolls of maps and charts, pages of notes, small stacks of drawings and diagrams. Shelves were also used as perches for the individual display of fossils, shells, and other curious specimens—on one shelf, there was a model of the human hand, on another, a lobster claw.

Even at the onset of his voyage, Darwin was preparing to think in two dimensions of time: the life span of all living things and the life span of a species, measured from the ancient Pleistocene period to the Holocene period, when humans came to exist. Darwin had absorbed the revolutionary principle articulated by Ernst Haeckel, “ontology replicates phylogeny,” a way of seeing evolution as a branching of all species from one, or very few, original ancestors.

Explorers plan their expeditions, all the while knowing that the actual thrill of discovery must come as a surprise—the rewarding gratification resulting from an unanticipated enlargement of knowledge. For Mark Adams, his primary tools are keen observation, awareness of orientation, and mindful navigation. One tool, Adams's ability to draw, allows the artist to transform himself from an expert witness into a creative participant. From his early days as an artist, he has made exact taxonomic drawings of specimens with the crisp line of his pencil. Wanting to indicate motion in his drawings, Adams began brushing his pencil drawings with the blur and ambiguity of walnut ink, achieving lighter or darker tones by diluting the ink with water. The sepia ink, with its “beautiful and forgiving texture,” gave Adams access to an enormous range of earth tones.

Conspicuously modest, Adams emphasized, “There are naturalists and scientists who are much better observers and deeper thinkers than myself. Yet I am grateful to have this chance to put my language on the walls of the museum, and my interpretation of the journey to the drawings. I do feel drawing is my way of moving through the world.”

Drawing is Adams's medium for remembering significant experience; it is both a visual note-taking and written storytelling. We spoke of the method of poet Mary Oliver, who made notes during her morning nature walks, evoking the feeling of the experience, rather than the idea the emotion summoned. In this, she had a kinship with two others who have influenced Adams's work, marine biologist Dr. Charles “Stormy” Mayo at the Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown and Dr. Graham Giese at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. On location, these alert observers each flip open a book and write and draw in the moment, as they are bucking the waves, or walking the beach. “They are my mentors,” Adams said. “They respond directly with a kind of immediate intuition. The key thing is to have one's own language for observation and thought.”

On PAAM's walls, Adams sequenced a twenty-panel composite, which he had previously



Coyote in the Milky Way, 2015, acrylic, pencil, and chalk on wood panel, 28 by 36 inches

exhibited as a unit at the Schoolhouse Gallery in 2014 as *The Landscape and the Map*. Adams described the exhibit at PAAM as a grid of coordinates and experiences, “an eight-foot square graphic novel of outer Cape Cod.” Each panel is isolated by its own grid, an arrangement that is something like a page-by-page narration of the larger story. “Some things can be mapped, others are largely invisible,” Adams explained, “but we mustn’t be blinded by categories.”

One passed panels showing silhouettes of sleek human forms, revealing similarity in morphology with avian and aquatic creatures. Everywhere one turned, the exhibition was animated with motion: birds flying in flocks, fish swimming in schools, tidal flows, wind currents, patterns of erosion and patterns of accumulation, effects of seasonal temperatures—all elements coordinated by a unified directional energy. The exhibition allowed us to gain a felt understanding of the connection between geological time and organic time, as if the evolution of the earth shared an uncanny parallel with the evolution of living things.

Adams gained an understanding of cartography from reading John Luis Borges’s fantasy history of the profession of mapping boundaries. Borges wrote, “The Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it.” Indeed, the most useful map must be drawn in a way to reduce the scale of the actual world, so that one inch on a scaled map might be equal to one mile across the real world. Adams created such a map by abutting sheets of Mylar on the museum floor and pouring colored inks onto the film so that the bleeding colors sat on rather than soaked into the surface. Gradations of color followed the contours of the sea-floor, evoking the beige landmass of Cape Cod and the lighter-shifting-to-darker blues indicating the varying topography under the waters of the Gulf of Maine.

As I strode a few yards from the tip of the Cape to the shallow shoals of the Grand Banks, imagining myself knee-deep in water, I had a marvelous sense of being uniquely transported and installed in a condensation of real space. The Mylar map on the floor and the series of maps running along the gallery’s four walls differed in their angle of orientation; unfolding along the wall, the drawings offered various glimpses of activity abounding around the coordinates. This accumulation of glimpses served to add a sense of temporal relation to the variety of activities, which functioned in a kind of harmony. Adams likened the steady flow of automobile traffic on a highway to the instinct of birds and fish to navigate in a controlled, orderly manner. Paradoxically, the details enhanced our sense of the whole. We are mindful of the “continental crust,” the landmass itself, and the “oceanic crust,” which is deeper and harder. According to Adams, “All these huge masses are shifting at a microscale, and combining to command glaciers to march with inexorable force. We stand in a very fluid space.”



Two views of the installation of Darwin’s cabin in the show at PAAM

For twenty-four years, Adams has been employed by the National Park Service, mapping the terrain under our feet and far offshore. With scientists from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Adams helped pull a ground-penetrating radar sled to map the layers that are decades old, even centuries old, under the sand dunes of the Province Lands, to see how they formed. He told me, “Regarding any spiritual or emotional connection I have, I get it from other scientists as well. The integration of physics and biology is a beautiful thing, like a flock of birds flying, how they coordinate with each other as they fly. They are responding to the chemistry they sense from the magnetic field of the earth, and they are responding to air currents and gravity, moisture, storms, and weather.”

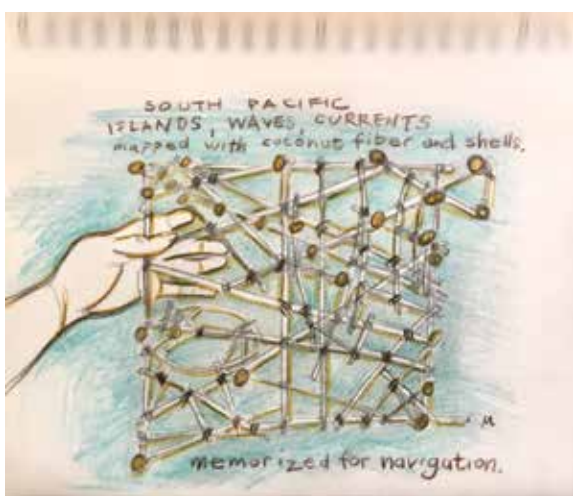
Explorers benefit, Adams believes, when they absorb the indigenous knowledge of the local people and their ways of recording facts and

conditions with totems, notches, and knots. He points out that early European maps indicate the west wind with a drawing of a puffy-cheeked cherub blowing air from the west. Every culture has a way of recording knowledge about how they move through geography. South Pacific Islanders, who sailed routinely between thousands of scattered islands, followed “stick charts,” weavings fashioned from bendable sticks made from coconut fronds. The chart is not so much a literal representation of the sea as an abstract picture of how ocean swells, winds, and currents interact with land.

If we no longer roam together in tribes, we do create patterns of kinship with chosen circles. Adams consorts with naturalists, scientists, artists, and writers, and their own passionate immersion in nature enriches the imaginative scope of the *Expedition* catalogue. Nick Flynn contributes a handwritten poem, “The



Benthos, 2017, colored ink on Mylar, 34 by 56 inches



Stick Chart (notebook page), 2018, colored pencil, 9 by 12 inches

South Pacific Islanders navigated thousand-mile stretches of ocean with no technology to speak of. Stick charts represented major islands and the currents, winds, and dominant wave directions between them. While not actually used as maps, they were teaching aids, memorized on land before a sea journey.

Shipwreck,” about a sailor washing ashore at night on a strange beach. Another poet, Marie Howe, documents Adams’s vivid sky-drawing, using stars as connecting points, to realize the image of the constellation called Coyote, its head lifted to howl in the winter sky. Adams comments on two drawings, “fiercely seen studies of a seal skull,” made by Michael Cunningham in a class taught by Adams. Writer Victoria Redel imagines our identity card “etched along a forearm”—“the word a reminder / that all our gorgeous variety is actually kin.” Writer Reif Larsen gives “Instructions for an Expedition,” telling a would-be explorer: “Hang the maps on the walls. Rub castor oil on your fingertips. Throw dirt into the sky. Balance on your haunches. Now wait. Wait until the world begins to shake and then dive toward the light.”

I was very interested to understand how Mark Adams combines scientific inquiry with intuition, the twin elements of his working process, and I asked him about this method.

“I start with observation, the experience,” he explained, “and I strive to present the feeling of immersion—what it’s like to be underwater in a Cape Cod kettle pond. To have all of your senses *smacked*, with a sensory, visual experience, changing light, moving water. I’m kind of a junkie for throwing myself into nature. I have a friend in

Truro, and we go running at night in the winter, along the beach in sleet storms. At first you think you will dread the challenge; then you do it and you are alive.”

The catalogue concludes with a candid back-and-forth between Adams and two scientist friends: Graham Giese, a coastal geomorphologist, and Rob Reilinger, a geophysicist. It is an exchange that succinctly sums up and reveals the essence of Mark Adams’s technique:

What I try to do as an artist is to put images together, sometimes in a non-rational way so that they bring surprise and provoke questions. Birds busting out of a figure, contours of wood grain sweeping through a landscape. And I steal elegant graphs and figures from science journals and drape them over a face or an ocean surface. . . . What also excites me is how these science stories compress time so that we can see a 50-million year saga of drifting continents or a century of beach building and overwash—that our short lives are long enough to “see” geology and evolution.



CHRISTOPHER BUSA is founder and editorial director of Provincetown Arts Press.

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Patrick Palmer, “Roman Sketch, X,”
2016, acrylic on board, 13 in x 9 in

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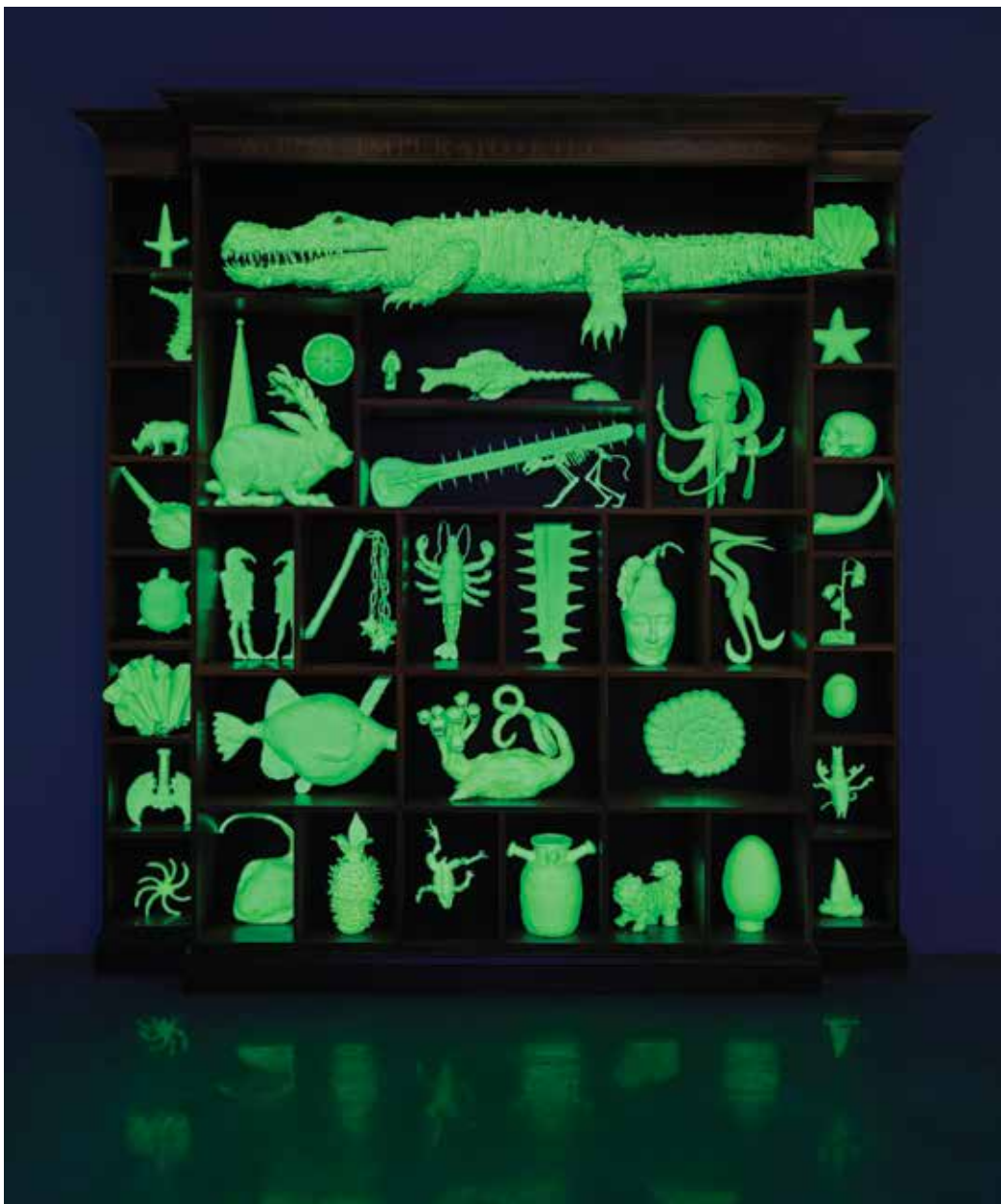
AT THE TRURO CENTER FOR THE ARTS AT CASTLE HILL

MARK DION, a hybrid anthropologist-artist, has opened a profound inquiry into how human knowledge is organized, sorted, categorized, itemized, labeled, documented, and displayed for public viewing. The exhibition *Mark Dion: Misadventures of a 21st-Century Naturalist*, which took place last fall at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art, examined thirty years of the artist's work, offering fundamentally new ways of seeing conceptual unity in wildly divergent materials. Dion's method is unusual: he will physically collect, sometimes in remote parts of the globe, diverse materials and send them to a museum for curators and experts to inventory, using available methods of classification. Once he sent a box of animal bones; puzzled at first, the recipients finally sorted the bones by size and shape.

Dion's system of classification follows in the methodology of experts from Aristotle to Linnaeus, who sorted the world into a hierarchy derived by the concept of the "great chain of being," which began as a

religious ordering of society and merged with an increasingly scientific view of the world: God and the angels were at the pinnacle; humans, animals, plants, and minerals followed in order. Dion builds structures to showcase his specimens, using a ladder or staircase as shelving cubbyholes, drawing on historical precedents that become as vitally present as the specimens that lined the shelves of Darwin's cabin on the British research vessel HMS *Beagle*.

Dion is this year's Woody English Distinguished Artist and Writer's Chair at the Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill. This August, he will present the Woody English Lecture at the Wellfleet Preservation Hall, discussing his many years as an artist concerned with environmental issues and the history of science. He will also lead participants in a studio seminar called the Wonder Workshop, investigating the tradition of the seventeenth-century "Cabinet of Curiosities," a forerunner for today's museums of art and natural history. — CB



(left)
The Phantom Museum (Wonder Workshop), 2015, walnut cabinet, objects with white glow-in-the-dark paint, black light, 102 by 96 by 12 inches

(facing page, clockwise from top left)
On Tropical Nature (detail), 1991, mixed media, 55 by 102 by 40 inches

Costume Bureau, 2006, mixed media, 76 by 135 by 39 inches

Scala Naturae, 1994, painted wooden structure, artifacts, plant specimens, taxidermy specimens, and bust, 117 by 39 $\frac{3}{8}$ by 93 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches

Blind/Hide—The Mobile Birding Unit, 2000, bird watching unit on the Tijuana River estuary near San Diego, 107 by 144 by 107 inches

Cabinet of Marine Debris, 2014, cabinet; wood, glass, metal, paint, assorted marine debris; plastic, rope, 113 by 84 by 32 inches

Marine Invertebrates, 2013, 70 objects in glass jars, isopropyl alcohol, glass and wood cabinet, 60 by 24 by 59 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches

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Artisans, Sculptors, Makers, and Doers

THE LEGACY OF TASHA HILL

By Susan Rand Brown



The Hairpin Studio

LIKE IMAGES ON A ROLL of black-and-white film, scenes from Tasha Hill unspool to memory. In *Building Provincetown*, David Dunlap refers to the multi-acre compound, on the northeast corner of Bradford and Howland Streets just high enough to be hidden from public view, as a “fantastic movie set depicting ur-Provincetown,” and possessing a “mystical feeling.” There are larger-than-life characters and stories here that border on communal mythology. We can imagine Rose “Sunny” Tasha (1910–1994) warming on her wood-burning kitchen stove the tar-covered gulls she’d rescued; and there is six-foot-plus Herman J. Tasha (1908–2000) bent over his work space in the Hairpin Studio, welding a bronze hairpin, one of many sculptural objects treasured through decades of use to become family heirlooms.

Accounts of which artist in the family taught another differ according to the teller—the history of family, like the history of art, is never a straight line. Yet one imagines that Herman, who transformed metal rods into jewelry and cast tiny sea creatures, must have influenced his sons Carl and Paul, themselves known for creating bronze sculptures, wearable art, and, for Paul, woodworking and artisanal constructions. In differing proportions and in their own ways, each of Sunny and Herman’s brood of four—Carla Javert Tasha Stefani, Carl Javert Tasha, Paula Josephine Tasha (“Josephine” in honor of Josephine del Deo, Sunny’s close friend), and Paul Daniel Tasha—became artists, builders, and environmentalists. Unpretentious and industrious, Sunny built the original windowed Hairpin Studio, a rugged structure, in the late 1950s; she later displayed her own handwrought hairpins, rings, and bracelets alongside Herman’s work. Around this time, and with help from family and artist friends who gravitated toward the legendary Tasha camaraderie, Sunny’s wooden cottages with cathedral-like, recycled windows were constructed.

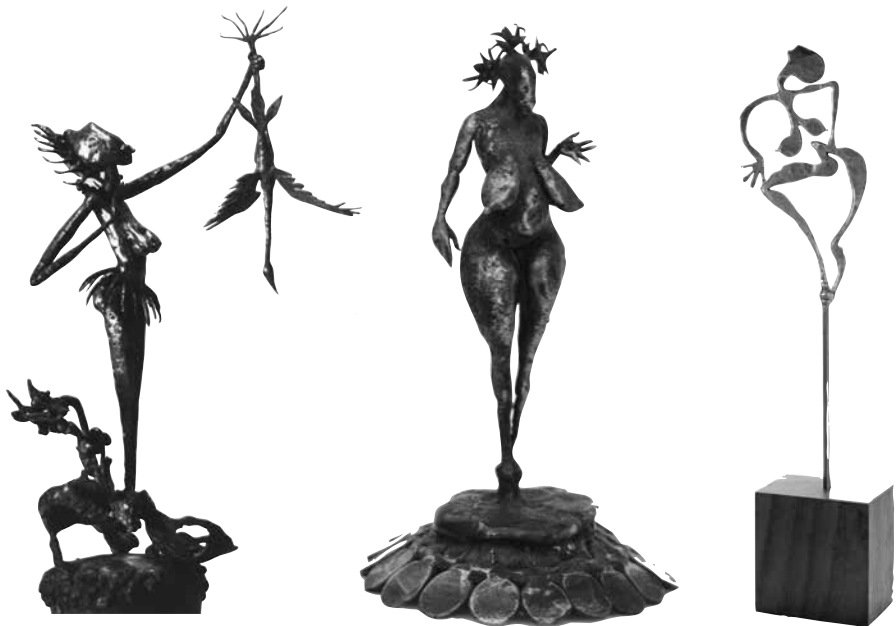
Before the compound was built, the Tasha family home was located at 222 Bradford Street, a house built in stages from the 1790s through the mid-nineteenth century. Herman was born in this house; so was his sister, Eva. In the late 1970s, Carl and his partner, Nancy Lamb Gribbin, purchased the sea captain’s house, providing a home and work space for themselves and Nancy’s son, Beau Gribbin. Later, Carl and Nancy’s daughter, Arielle Tempest

Rose Tasha, grew up at 222. Now it is Nancy who watches over the heritage of the house and the living heritage of Carl Tasha, whose artwork remains in demand.

When Carl was sixteen, Nancy told me, he saw the work of Ernesto, a metal sculptor in Provincetown. On a bench set up in front of the old library, Ernesto made bulls with bronze rods and a torch. “That really stimulated Carl’s desire to become an artist. Carl’s bulls were also influenced by Cretan mythology, and by Picasso,” Nancy explained, showing me an example of

this work in a display case. “These are very intimate; not a literal rendition of a bull, but the suggestion of one.”

Woman Holding a Dead Bird, a bronze and copper sculpture, rests on a pedestal. The woman, a huntress in an elaborate headdress, holding a gracefully elongated seabird at arm’s length, appears to be performing an ancient ritual. Nancy recalled Carl’s interpretation: “She’s looking at death and she’s looking at food.” The piece took Carl ten years to complete. Another bronze, *Vietnam Veteran*, suggests a wounded warrior.



Woman Holding a Dead Bird (detail), 1974–1980, bronze and copper, 24 by 8 by 15 inches; *Supplicating Woman*, 1984, bronze on marble, 5½ by 3 by 3 inches; *Flat Lady*, 1982, bronze on walnut, 13 by 3 by 2 inches



Limited edition solid brass belt buckles: *Kneeling Unicorn*, 1979, 2 by 1¾ by 1 inches; *Shell Lady*, 1980, 1½ by 3 by 1¼ inches; *Mud Turtle*, 1980, 2 by 1¾ by 1¼ inches
GIFTS OF STEPHEN DESROCHES IN HONOR OF THE PAAM 100 CENTENNIAL

"He's returned from Vietnam—psychologically, if not physically, blown to bits—yet maintains a stoic, fierce self-respect," Nancy explained. "One of the features of Carl's work is that his people always have a kind of dignity."

Tucked into another shelf are several mythological and African-inspired pieces, including a prototype for coal black Corten steel *Flat Lady* sculptures. "One of the first galleries where Carl showed his work was the Grove Street in New York, which specialized in African art. Carl's work really fit," Nancy said. In Provincetown, his *Flat Ladies* can be viewed at the restaurant Bubala's by the Bay.

Carl attended Provincetown High School, where he was a star gymnast, as well as a voracious reader. "Carl had an old-fashioned classical education, so he really knew his Virgil and his Homer," Nancy recalled. These threads, a "classical education" with its emphasis on Greek and Roman mythology, a gymnast's muscle memory of graceful athleticism, plus a life spent close to the sea, defined his creations.

Carl first attended college at a small university in Maine, and then in the early 1960s was accepted to Harvard University. He and his first wife, Priscilla Husted, moved from Provincetown to Boston, where Carl went to school and drove a cab. It became too much, Nancy recalled: "Carl once told me, even though he started fooling around with his father's tools when he was twelve and was selling his creations locally by age sixteen, it was only after he'd flunked out of college twice that he began to consider his art seriously. It became a

spiritual quest for him to find the truth in conveying the essence of things."

Carl had always been encouraged by other artists, especially the artists of the generation before him. Nancy remembered that Robert Motherwell and Hudson D. Walker were very supportive of Carl's sculpture. With the help of Leo Manso, who taught and exhibited in Provincetown over many decades, Carl found a patron in New Hope, Pennsylvania, who provided him with a secluded cottage, a studio, an agent, and a small stipend. Carl's two daughters, Andréa X Tasha and Deirdre Q Tasha, were born during this time.

At the Philadelphia Museum School, Carl also studied with Sam Feinstein, who had studied with Hans Hofmann; a love for painting continued throughout his life. Soon, Carl was selling sculptures through Philadelphia galleries. "As soon as he made sculptural pieces, they sold," Nancy said. "But he was still struggling with doubts about his own art, and it was difficult for him to be part of the commercial scene." After a brief move to Woodstock, New York, he returned to Provincetown, working out of the Hairpin Studio and diving for lobsters with his brother, Paul.

Carl Tasha Designs in Limited Editions, founded in 1984, was intended to support Carl and Nancy and their children, so that Carl could focus more attention on one-of-a-kind sculptures. But success came with a price. As sales grew, other people were needed to do finishing work. In the end, expansion in some ways created more problems than it solved. They were showing and selling all over the country,

from Bloomingdale's department store, to Brentano's bookshops, to the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, along with several hundred galleries, boutiques, and leather shops. Locally, Carl exhibited his work at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum (PAAM), Tirca Karlis Gallery, Group Gallery, Ellen Harris Gallery, Berta Walker Gallery, Jacob Fanning Gallery, and others. By the



Carl Tasha at work, 1975

mid-1980s, Nancy was handling the business end while also preparing pieces to fill orders.

Carl's process of making jewelry in editions was complex, in particular because the designs themselves are maximal, whether based on the sensuous human form, floating sea pods, frogs, or fish. "Carl always worked with a bronze rod in one hand and an oxyacetylene torch in another," Nancy said, "drawing with the melting metal on a steel plate, often fusing and forging elements together. Most metal sculptors work first in wax but Carl first worked in metal." This metal model goes to a foundry, where the traditional lost wax injection casting process is used. "Because of its three-dimensionality, reproducing Carl's work is challenging, requiring skilled craftsmanship on the part of the founder."

A substantial holding of Carl's sculptural jewelry—eighteen belt buckles, a bracelet, a necklace, and a small sculpture, *Female Figure with Tree*—is part of the permanent collection at PAAM, gifted by Provincetown-based writer and cultural historian Steven Desroches. Together, they form a fantastical bronze bestiary of land and sea creatures, real and imaginary. A unicorn stretches on hind legs, its tail an amalgam of flowing seaweeds; channeling a classical motif, a female figure emerges from a spiral shell. Most recently, through the efforts of Provincetown art



Beau (Rainbow) and Nancy Gribbin with Carl Tasha at FAWC, 1973

historian and curator Stephen Borkowski and donor Clair Sprague, Carl's Celtic dragon necklace was included in the book and accompanying exhibition *Keepsakes and Treasures: Stories from Historic New England's Jewelry Collection* (Historic New England, 2016) by Laura E. Johnson.

In poor health, Carl left Provincetown for Honolulu in the early 2000s. He died there in 2006 at the age of sixty-two. Throughout our conversation, Nancy often spoke of Carl in the present tense; his spirit hovers over her daily life. "I don't hear his voice as much as I'd like to," she said. "When I have a question about a piece of jewelry, his major advice is, 'Well, look at it; you figure it out.' That was how he taught himself." Nancy removed a small silver hand from a shelf. "He literally kept looking at his own hand, and then made this. He had beautiful hands. He figured it all out by himself, how to draw in metal. It was so quick—the metal was melting, and you only had seconds, fractions of seconds, to do something with it. It was like watching a magician."

PAUL TASHA was born nine years after Carl. Paul, too, sat by Herman's side as he welded brass rods in the Hairpin Studio. He is also a jeweler and sculptor, but this is not his exclusive identity. His range of occupations includes wood-carver, fisherman, lobsterman, equestrian, builder, and—while he modestly declines this description—architect.

Beginning in the 1970s, when he was sixteen, Paul gradually took over from Sunny as caretaker

and carpenter of the property, tending to its Hobbit-like cottages on the hill. Paul built one structure, distinguished by its stone exterior, for himself: a one-room work space, living space, and gallery. "At first I was intimidated," is how Paul

described the moment when Sunny asked him to care for the property while she was traveling; the assignment became permanent. "My mother's attitude was, don't let not knowing stop you," he said. "I always approach things that way."

In Victorian architecture, elaborately designed, machine-made brass doorknobs and hinges are considered house jewelry. Paul forged his own door pulls and latches. One resembles a salamander crawling up a tree; another has fish-like scales. There are duck decoys, meticulously carved in locust wood that has been scavenged in Truro. A chess set using variegated woods and metal is crafted to satisfy the hand as well as the eye. On a wooden table, ancient tortoise shells rest alongside buckles, bracelets, and sculptures, seamlessly connecting nature and art.

During our interview, Paul reached for a piece memorializing Lucky, his quarter horse. The bubbly quality of the bronze form, its muscular body and arched neck, glowed in the sun. "I was twelve when I put my first piece, an antelope, into a juried show at PAAM. You enter anonymously; they don't know your name or age. They accepted it, and it was sold. Some of the artists were upset when they found out my age," he said. "I never really thought about myself as an artist. It's something I do. I like to make things, but that doesn't define me."

Paul is now considering a return to the world of fine art. "I've been fishing or diving for lobster since I was sixteen or seventeen. Diving is a young man's game; I'd always planned to revisit the world of creativity," he said. "But never with the pressure of needing to pay my rent, or put gas in the car. Not for survival." Paul talked about Carl's struggle to make his living as an artist. "I'll make art if I feel like it, and find some way



Paul Tasha

PHOTO BY MISCHA RICHTER

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to market it. Better to be uncompromising, not have anyone looking over your shoulder.”

As we finished our conversation, Paul led the way to the three-story house he’s been building over several decades, framed with thick beams washed up on the back shore. The already-legendary structure with a treetop view is a uniquely Provincetown instance of land art. There’s even a skylight to catch the moon.

My tour through the Tasha terroir ended with the Harry Kemp cottage, built in the 1950s by Sunny and her crew using recycled materials. Known as the Poet of the Dunes, Kemp palled around with Eugene O’Neill and the Provincetown Players in the early decades of the twentieth century. By the 1940s, he was ensconced in an unheated henhouse for the (decommissioned) Coast Guard Station on the back shore, where O’Neill and Agnes Boulton lived during the 1920s. The main structure eventually blew out to sea, leaving the historically important “henhouse,” now known as the Kemp-Tasha Shack, which is owned and maintained by the Tasha family.

In duration and bohemian substance, Kemp’s life and the Tasha family’s history as artists, builders, and keepers of the land connect to over a century of Provincetown history. Carl and Paul’s siblings have added to the legacy as well. Paula’s mythical fish watercolors have been exhibited at PAAM; the family treasures her hand-painted holiday cards. Carla is known for her work in stained glass and also as the founder and chef at Café Express, a Commercial Street restaurant that specialized in fresh ingredients. Carla’s desserts are now featured at Terra Luna in North Truro, the first of two restaurants founded by Carla’s daughter, Raina Stefani, who recently opened Provincetown’s Baie Bar Resto, committed to a locally sourced menu. A potter as well as a chef, Raina features her handmade china and porcelain dishes at Baie. Carla’s son Nicco gifts the family with woodcarvings and animal cutouts in sheet metals.

Carl’s daughter Andréa is a visual artist and a cofounder, with her sister Deirdre, of Provincetown’s Moonsusser Tattoo studio. Like her father and her uncle Paul, Andréa is inspired by mythology and sea lore. Deirdre is also described as an accomplished painter. Beau, a commercial fisherman and captain of the F/V *Glutton*, is involved in advocating with legislators for small boat fisheries. Arielle’s family business, Labrador Construction, encourages clients to “go green.” The Tasha legacy continues, its roots and branches an essential part of Provincetown’s communal history. 🌊

SUSAN RAND BROWN has spent summers in her family’s Commercial Street home since her teens and began writing about the arts for the Provincetown Advocate in the late 1970s. She has since profiled hundreds of Outer Cape artists for Provincetown Arts and the Provincetown Banner, and is also a regular contributor to Art New England. “Mothers and Sons in the Plays of Eugene O’Neill” was the topic of her PhD dissertation.

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Gary Kuehn

YOU KNOW, YOU'RE NOT AS FREE AS YOU THINK YOU ARE

By Cindy Hinant

This is the second installment in Cindy Hinant's series of interviews with Gary Kuehn.

WHEN I VISITED Gary Kuehn's summer home in Truro last year, his studio space had exploded. The walls of the house were covered with a new series of energetic works on paper that spilled into every room. I was struck by how these drawings and paintings revealed so much of Kuehn's thinking process. The 150 works he produced—a selection will be on view this summer in the exhibition *Alternative Desires* at Gaa Gallery in Provincetown—comprise a rich and diverse investigative series featuring geometric forms that have been distorted by paint drips and graphite gestures.

This untitled series signals a new direction for Kuehn, while succinctly summarizing one of the primary concerns that the artist has been addressing throughout his long and varied career: the metaphorical implications of freedom and boundaries, while exploring the inherent qualities of materials and the formal and psychological tension between disparate forms. This conceptual approach to material made him a significant figure in the post-minimal and process art movements of the '60s and continues to inspire his work today.

Over the past seven years, I have worked with Kuehn as his archivist and studio manager and spent a few weeks each summer at the artist's summer home on Slough Pond, which he shares with his wife, the writer Suzanne McConnell. During these visits, I've recorded a series of conversations with Kuehn about his work and life. The following interview is a second installment in a series of dialogues based on edited transcripts from these talks.



Portrait of the artist, 2017

PHOTO BY CINDY HINANT

CINDY HINANT: As a Rutgers University student in the early '60s, you were immersed in the Fluxus movement, attending happenings with Allan Kaprow and La Monte Young. How did this influence your work?

GARY KUEHN: It was important for me because I found out what I didn't want to do. In 1963 I was invited to perform in the Yam Festival at the Hardware Poets Playhouse in New York. I had concocted this performance ritual where a group of my female classmates were in the

space pushing a huge yellow ball around, which was like a sun, and when it stopped they took turns drilling holes in the floor to plant garishly painted plaster flowers. It was choreographed to the alternating sounds of a bathtub filling, and a dopey pop song from the time, "Sally Go 'Round the Roses." The women wore nightgowns over balloons filled with red paint, which they popped with a pin at random moments—and I should mention that I had turned on a lawn sprinkler that swept back and forth across



Installation view of 1960s sculptures in Gary Kuehn: *Between Sex and Geometry*, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, 2014 © Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein

PHOTO BY STEFAN ALTENBURGER



Black Painting, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 24 by 24 inches

COURTESY OF HÄUSLER CONTEMPORARY MUNICH | ZÜRICH

the performance space. It was so wacky. And while I was pleased to have an engaged and interesting audience that included Rauschenberg, Oldenburg, and Kaprow, I was terrified at how psychologically revealing the performance turned out to be.

CH: You actually brought a sprinkler inside?

GK: Yes, I hooked it up to a faucet knowing that the water mixed with the paint would cover the floor in an interesting way. The worst part was that the performance space was on the second floor—it was really a mess. I can't imagine what the floor below looked like afterwards. The women had red paint running down their bodies, the paint on the flowers began to run, and there were pools of water on the floor. I was mortified. I vowed that I would never do anything like that again, something that I didn't have complete control over.

CH: I can see how the complete freedom offered by Fluxus, with no parameters or limits, would give you nothing to push against.

GK: From the very beginning, I was weaned on the avant-garde and the idea of pushing the limits of what art could be, as it was clear to all of us that Modernism was being played out. The art and life question as posited by Kaprow and Rauschenberg was the essential concern of the artists I was around in the early '60s. It was in this environment that I started juxtaposing ideas and materials from everyday life with conventional painting and sculpture and forcing them into a relationship.

CH: Your everyday life at the time was supported by union ironwork and roofing. How did this influence your approach to materials?

GK: In my experience as a construction worker,

I became aware of the expressive and metaphoric potential of construction materials. Even the way materials were stacked on job sites interested me—there would be piles of geometric materials stacked haphazardly, which I saw as a metaphor for the line between order and chaos. *Tar Piece* (1967) is one work that came out of my day-to-day experience as a roofer. Although it was conceived a priori, the geometric forms sagged and behaved like a slab of tar would behave on a hot summer day.

CH: You've stated that you want to "set up situations where the work would make itself." How do you see your role as the artist within these parameters?

GK: I think that it's important for any artist to have a working method that can be applied to

the cultural moment. Almost all of my work is dialectical; positing something, selecting something, then turning around and looking for its opposite or antithesis and then letting the energy of the work come from the play between the two. I would say that I'm playing both sides. I set the trap and then fall into it and there is nothing else to do but follow the rules. In a psychological way, there is a balance between dominance and submission or surrender. There's something very satisfying about being both the perpetrator and the victim in the same work—it lends itself to a complete experience. Let's say it's a supposed crime. I can't be implicated because I was just seeing the whole event from a distance—I wasn't the agent of squeezing or bending, I was just watching it in a godlike way. By distancing myself from the decision-making process, I become, in effect, the instigator or "unmoved mover," allowing inherently expressive materials and techniques to assert themselves.

CH: Your *Black Paintings* series (1969–present) is a body of work in which you force shapes to fit within a predetermined format. In this series, organic fluid shapes are distorted and pressed against the edge of the picture plane. This seems to relate to your disillusionment with the Fluxus movement and asserts your interest in working within rather than outside "the box." The *Black Paintings* focus on the painting as a container or as a trap, much like the gesture pieces, in which the edge of the painting was the edge of the world.

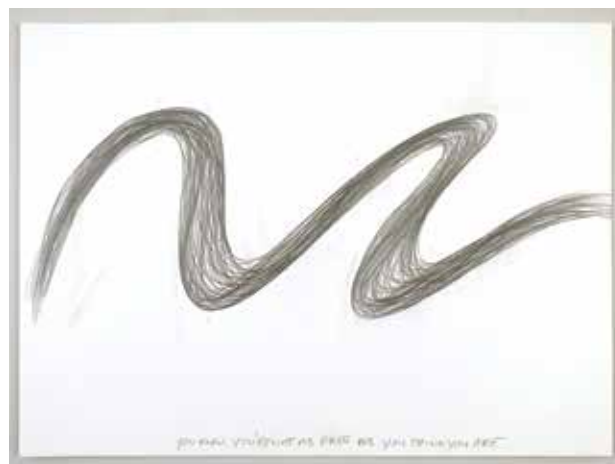
GK: Early on I decided that one of the toughest things to do is to take on art in a larger sense, to take on the challenge of doing art that's unmistakable and takes on the whole of art history. If you can do something like that, you have really done something. Here, you are at the very center of the idea of art, which gets more dissipated the more you get away from the center, which of course is always shifting. When I was in school, students tried, almost as a game, to get as far away as they could from the center as possible. I was skeptical of this approach, and I think that's



Tar Piece, 1967, wood and tar, 25½ by 216 by 72 inches (destroyed) COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



Untitled, 2014, graphite and coffee on canvas, 24 by 36 inches COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



You Know, You're Not as Free as You Think You Are, 2017, graphite on paper, 22 by 30 inches

PHOTOS BY CINDY HINANT

why I started painting; it seemed to be the most controlled thing to do.

Why are the paintings black? I wanted a formal neutrality, and I was sensitive to the implications of color. At a base level, I was thinking about what is a painting, what's a canvas, what's a given format, and I began to consider the stretched canvas as a container. I had an aversion to composition and design, and so developed a procedural approach to painting. I started filling the space with flexible circles, which distorted and adjusted to each other until the space was filled. In the early works, gravity

was a major organizational device and would determine how the shapes settled.

CH: So, essentially you built a wooden box around the canvas, attached shapes made from strips of stainless steel (or paper in the earliest versions), and then poured paint into the resulting forms. This process is very similar to how you would pour plaster to make your *Melt Pieces* (1963–70). What's different or the same about your approach to material in the *Black Paintings*?

GK: The *Black Paintings* are in essence an investigation of paint as a material with physical properties in much the same way that I exploit construction materials for their intrinsic expressive properties. Acrylic has a physicality that I like, and the whole procedure of making these is, I think, evident and honest to the nature of the material. When I use construction materials, found objects, and materials from other trade professions, these materials come with their own baggage, which tends to complicate the works. In this series, I wanted to narrow down the essence of these issues of compression, distortion, and entrapment.

CH: Another contradiction in your work is the way you limit free forms by creating boundaries. *You Know, You're Not As Free As You Think You Are* (2017) appears to be a group of wild graphite squiggles until you realize that the hard edge of the form was created by a stencil. Can you explain this desire to limit expression?

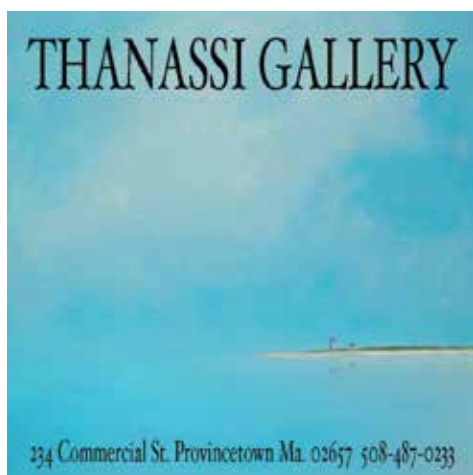
GK: Until I started the *Gesture Project* (1964–present), I had a fear of expression, or fear of expressiveness. If I needed a particular line, I would make a line and then make a stencil of the line and then draw the line again by using the stencil. I wanted to make a series that confined all of the options and the possibilities of a gesture on a piece of paper. To that end, I began to use stencils as a frame that blocked the gesture, so that if I was thrashing around with a pencil, the edge of the rectangular stencil became evident. The line would hit the edge of the world and have to bounce back to the center of the space, sort of like a billiard ball.

CH: You set up situations where mistakes are inevitable and certain elements are left to chance. Your stencil drawings, with their regular measured lines, could have a sterile quality, but you insist on imperfection; the graphite smears or a cup of coffee gets spilled, and the works refuse to submit to the authority of the stencil.

GK: The graphite smears, the pencil jumps, you don't always follow the stencil exactly. I didn't like the idea of working on something for hours and then one pencil slip would destroy the piece. I was comfortable with the little blips and mistakes, keeping it ordinary and signifying that the works were not about purity or precision. There were probably mechanical ways to do what I did, but I liked the vitality and fallibility of it.

Avoiding perfection is an idea that I picked up from Claes Oldenburg, who in 1964 exhibited his work *Bedroom Ensemble* (1963) at the Sidney Janis Gallery. Richard Artschwager had fabricated the sculpture installation, and there were some nicks or blemishes in the Formica, which needed to be repaired. Oldenburg was pretty upset and said to me in effect, 'See, this is what happens when you have this purity. The tyranny of it really gets you in the end—you become a victim of your own precepts.' I took this observation to heart; it gave allowance for less-than-perfect craftsmanship, for slips and mistakes, and over-painting, and all that. I didn't want to be identified with a pristine way of working, so oftentimes the coffee spots are deliberate. While working on a piece, I like to think that there is no difference between the drawing and myself. I try to keep the working process spontaneous and ordinary. ☒

CINDY HINANT is an artist and writer based in New York whose work is concerned with postfeminist representations of gender and the utopic aspirations of Minimalism. Her work has been exhibited at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, the Egyptian Modern Art Museum, the Lenbachhaus Munich, and the Palais de Tokyo. In 2013, she curated the exhibition Gary Kuehn: Postures at the Joe Sheftel Gallery, and in 2014 she contributed an essay to Kuehn's retrospective exhibition catalogue for the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein.



Marian Roth

ON BENDED LIGHT

By Patrick T. Davis

A van.
A tent.
An outhouse.
An ice-fishing hut.
A hot dog stand.
A geodesic dome.
A dune shack.



THESE ARE AMONG the spaces Marian Roth has built as, or converted into, cameras that she has inhabited. But just because she has made and used these cameras, we should be cautious before calling her a “photographer,” a title that rests uneasily on her. Yes, she uses photographic equipment and techniques, but not in any customary or usual way. And, as Gaston Bachelard has taught us in *The Poetics of Space*, it is the *inhabiting* that is what’s really important here.

To inhabit deeply is also to allow oneself to be inhabited, and that phenomenon is what happens for Roth when she becomes an “artist in residence” inside of one of her cameras. She is inhabited by the images she takes, her soul and consciousness—her self—awakened by the spirit of “what cannot be seen,” as she likes to say. The picture she takes, in many ways, is incidental though never accidental. It happens, it is, because she is there to see it. It is Roth’s attention to what is gone—or going—or lost that gives much of her work an elegiac quality. She is bearing witness in her inhabitations before it is too late.

I think even Roth herself would tell you that the cameras themselves are often of the simplest sort—camera obscura—which emphasizes even further the importance of her inhabitations. Roth, like Bachelard, understands that inhabiting a geodesic dome *means* something fundamentally different than inhabiting an ice-fishing hut. Not only are the spaces themselves different, but the histories they have seen are different, the realities inside them are different, for the way light enters them and shapes time inside of them is different. They are, quite literally, universes apart.

And just as the spaces themselves have different meanings, they are made more different still when inhabited by an artist, a seer. As space, they are present for what has been, is, and will be, though in different ways; as cameras they are simply an eye. This phenomenon of the camera giving rise to a sort of self is made plain by the piece *What the Dune Shack Sees*.

When inhabited by the artist, though, these spaces are also the first-person “I.” And,

so, these unusual spaces Roth has made to be camera eyes have an ontology to them, and provoke all manner of question about what it means to be—a human, an artist, a queer, anywhere, somewhere, everywhere, suspended in a ray of light.

My admiration for her work, I admit, may be colored by the act of curating her most recent exhibit, *Marian Roth: On Bended Light*, at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum (PAAM), which spans more than twenty years of Marian Roth’s groundbreaking work. I embraced this task—of taking the chronological history of these works and tearing it apart, of reassembling them in a new time line of sorts—because playing with time in the glow of Marian Roth is surely among the most exciting experiences I’ve ever had. Yes, these images have the ability to inhabit us and bring us to reverie, and their bended light has put me on bended knee. I don’t believe that we should have—can have—a cool distance from art. I do not aspire to the critic’s remove.

And, certainly, I am not Roth’s only admirer, and her accolades speak for themselves. She has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Pollock Krasner Fellowship, a fellowship from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and was honored with a lifetime award for artistic excellence by PAAM. She most recently exhibited her work at the Griffin Museum of Photography and exhibits in Provincetown with AMP Gallery.



(top) *What the Dune Shack Sees*, 1998, original paper positives, hand-coated silver gelatin on rag paper, C-Scape Dune Shack camera obscura, 30 by 44 inches; (above) *The Visit*, 2002–2015, hand-coated silver gelatin with lithographed figures, rag paper, 15 by 23 inches

UNIVERSAL QUESTIONS run through Roth’s work. Questions about the self in space, whether that is the space of home (*She’s Home*, *The Visit*) or of the cosmos (*Cosmic Circus*). And, even more specifically, what it means to be *an artist* in space (*The Artist and More*), and to be aware of that fact and how one can come to perceive its inescapable subjectivity fully and accurately, if not necessarily objectively.

It is this act of seeing—of perception—that has influenced and defined Roth most deeply across her career. What she is really looking at as she inhabits a space is its light,



She's Home, 2015, black-and-white resin-coated paper, lithography ink, 19 by 24 inches

which is to say its time. She looks to capture it and bend it, and in so doing creates the illusion of impossibly slowing it so that we might last with it a bit longer, as in the *Bending Light* series.

This again points to the distance between her work and that of “photographers.” She is not so much concerned with the scene or the moment in time as she is with time itself and how to understand what makes it, shapes it, alters it, and erases it. Waiting for a loved one can



A Complicated Dream: The Positive-Negative House, 2003, hand-coated emulsion on rag paper, caramel corn tin pinhole camera, 22 by 30 inches

make time drag, though gravitational weight can bend it to the point of disappearance. Illness can alter time, turning what was taken for granted into the most precious and fleeting thing. Loss and death can rip it away, memories are erased as it passes.

There is no richer image that evokes these sorts of questions than that of the house. It is a symbol nearly as old as history itself, representing shelter and home. It is the place we most associate with childhood and family. It is where we learn, love, imagine, and daydream. In many cases, it structures our stories and histories in its rooms, attics, and basements, giving shape to our higher thoughts and our darker fears. And so, it should not surprise us that much of Roth's work captures the idea of the house in *The Truro*

House: Red, then in *The Ghost House*, *Quartet*, *Memory Itself*, and *A Complicated Dream*.

This house, repeated and revisited, is a literal house on Cape Cod, which one child has said “is what the end of the world looks like.” It is a haunted house with ghosts; the memory of the universal house we all seek as home; and an unsettling dream in both the positive and negative senses. Notably, it is in one of the most primitive of Roth's lithographs, *History Lesson: Home*, that the house is transformed. So, it is a literal moment in time, a haunting from another time, memory writ large, dreams, history—all studies in time and at different times throughout her career. One universal house across time, beyond time.

Of course, to be outside of a house provokes us to imagine the rooms inside, the lives lived, and events we have not been witness to. The house



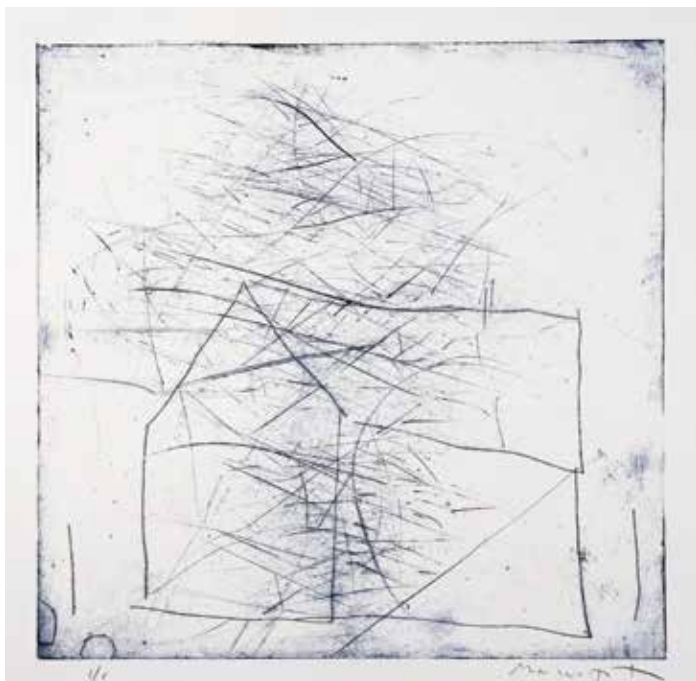
The Truro House, Red, 2002, original color negative, Dodge Caravan camera obscura, 30 by 39 inches

inhabits our imagination as much as we might inhabit the physical space; the phenomenon of consciousness is transposed. In viewing a house with such intent, we are brought closer to the position—to the insight and inspiration—of the artist herself. But nowhere is this desire to be inside—to inhabit and to be inhabited—stronger than with the image of the house in winter. It becomes an increasingly powerful image of safety, welcoming, and warmth, richer for the imagined life within as witnessed from the barren life without. Inside and outside are inverted with the season.

And so, in a piece like *Time Travellers' Winter Visit* we can better understand the loneliness of the figures, despite their numbers, because they have not inhabited and are not inhabited by the house. We should pay note to the broad arc of history conveyed in the title by “time travellers” and the temporary nature of them appearing for just a “visit.” In



Time Travellers' Winter Visit, 2003–2015, Ilfochrome direct positive, lithographed figures, 20 by 38¼ inches



History Lesson: Home, 2015, monprint, 10 by 10 inches

comparison, *Some Time Travellers on Their Journey: Winter* shows us just what the search for home means: a journey through time, and one that may not deliver us from our existential wandering. The subject, again, is time despite the scenes we may first see.

If the house in Roth's work captures our imagination about space and time, the figures that appear in her work ask the even more complex questions of our place in space—what is real, and are we even here? As silhouettes, are these figures present in the scene, or absent and cut from it? Are they facing us, confronting us with our own questions of self? Or are they turned from us and also observers of the scene before us? Are we walking with them, on their journeys across time, and, if so, are they haunting or comforting? Do they stand in for, or apart from, the artist? Yes. They may be rendered as flat lithographs, but they are perhaps among the more multidimensional features of Roth's work.

What we know for certain is that they are wandering and searching across time. In these pieces, we also see the artist working across time—visiting and revisiting and revising her work—with as much as fifteen years elapsing from the time the picture is first captured to Roth's manipulations that create a final form.

And as universal as these ideas of space, time, and self might be across the photographic work, they are balanced by an undeniable specificity that we can identify as Cape Cod, as Truro, as Provincetown, as the Pilgrim Monument, as the pier, as that boat on that windy day. Which is to say, where the photographic work brings forth specifics for a poetic and mythic sense of space and time, Roth's paintings are especially symbolic and more anchored to the reality she questions and bends.

They do not reflect an idea to ponder (such as memory or space), but connect with a more visceral view of existence: what does it mean to live right here, right now? In a fishing village? In the twenty-first century? Judging by the scene in *Homage to a Fishing Village* it is, by all evidence, a wonderful, bright, and highly unusual experience indeed. These paintings are insistent on both their symbolism and the reality to which they refer, and that includes the materiality of the paintings themselves. It is that handled proof of life in the here and now that is also seen in *A Cure for Loneliness*. These are paintings definitively of place and reference, while the photographs seem more of space and ideas.

Counterbalancing abstract time across Roth's work is also her reach for accepted or expected reality in materials—her hand-coated emulsion, the Ilfochrome direct positives, rag paper, oil stick, collaged bits from life. It is in this roughness that we are reminded of Jeannette Winterson's

clarifying observation: *art objects*. It objects to reality, alters it, and adds to it. If life were adequate, we would have no need to make art. Roth's art objects with its materiality front and center. These spaces, visions, times, hauntings, wanderings, histories, visits, symbols, and places are real. We can see that and we can feel them as such.

Which brings me to *Blue: Five Minutes in the Kitchen of the C-Scape Dune Shack Camera Obscura*, which, in my view, captures each of the aspects of Roth's work I've spoken to so far. It is one of the earlier pieces in the PAAM exhibit and was taken as a five-minute exposure from the C-Scape dune shack. It is so purely about time, about those five minutes in that specific space. This is what five minutes of time staring back at us looks like. As Bachelard reminds us, it is the hut or shack that concentrates and focuses the reality that is around it, turning the real into the poetic, like it did for Thoreau in his woods.

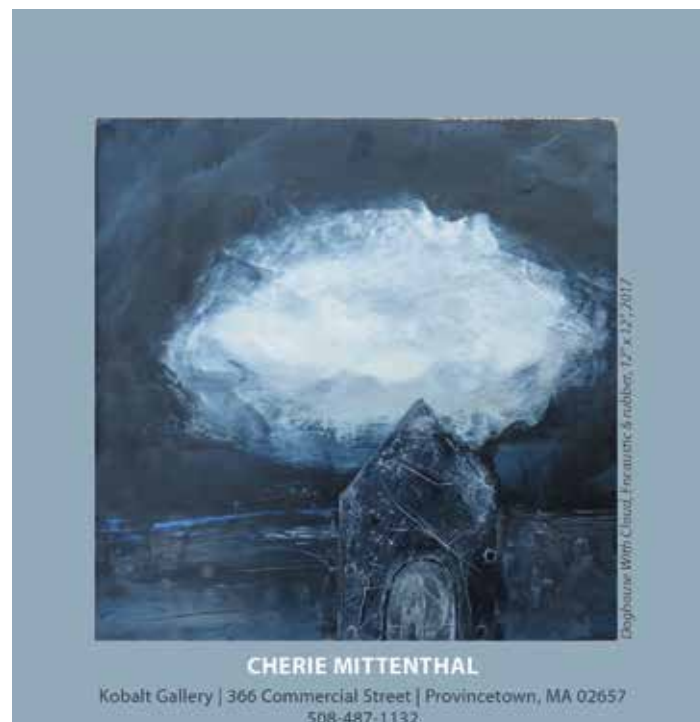
This early and highly tactile vision of how to capture the unseen truth of this place is surrounded by Roth's most current work—as contemporary as anything I've seen. Looking at the pieces in this exhibition all together, we see one of Marian's first acts of inhabiting a camera and how it has influenced a career still well underway. We see her witnessing this concentrated space of the shack, daring to contemplate time in a place where the sands shift yet all somehow remains. In this early assemblage, we see each possible photo, all of them at once, and the singular piece, too. We see inside the shack, and beyond it. We see inside the camera, and beyond it. We see the materiality of the collaged color positives, and the softening lines of time that a long exposure creates.

With this early effort and the digital companions to it—made twenty years later—we see as if through the eyes of another. That seems to be among the most sacred and intimate and desired acts for us as humans, and it is inspired by the work of very few artists.

So, as viewers of her work, as momentary curators who reorder it yet again for ourselves, I would like to end with a question:

Are we here, now, in this space and time, looking at pictures on a page? Or are we here, now, looking through all the cameras Marian Roth has inhabited, seeing temporarily through those eyes and hers? And, if so, do we have the courage, here and now, to let the images inhabit us back? ▣

PATRICK T. DAVIS is the leading collector of Marian Roth's work and curated her 2017 retrospective at PAAM.



Remember Me

LARRY COLLINS TAKES THE LONG ROAD HOME FROM THE WAR IN VIETNAM

By Sue Harrison

LARRY COLLINS STILL processes the Vietnam War one canvas at a time, one memory at a time, one meeting of Vietnam vets at a time. He came back from the war whole, but not complete. Parts of his heart and his mind will always be in that place of dense, mysterious greenery and flash floods. A place where endless bombs fell, friends were alive one day and dead the next, and enemies looked exactly like the people he was there to help. This past fall, the Amarillo Museum of Art in Amarillo, Texas, honored Collins with an exhibit focused on Vietnam. The show featured nine of the dynamic Vietnam-themed oil paintings that Collins has done since the war, along with thirty of his wartime photographs, dozens of his combat illustrations, and ephemera from his own private collection. It is a striking time capsule of remembrance.



1968, 2015–17, oil on canvas, 36 by 96 inches

Not coincidentally, the exhibit is titled *Remember Me*, a phrase that resonates on several levels. Collins and other young soldiers were nearly forgotten when they returned home from Vietnam. Instead of the parades their fathers received after World War II, Vietnam vets were met with protestors and angry chants.

“When I came home, not one person met me at the airport,” Collins says. He had flown home in civilian clothes after being told by the army not to wear his uniform because of how he might be treated. “I remember eventually everyone had left but me, and I was standing there with my duffle thinking, who is here for me? No one.”

He didn’t have many civilian clothes and would often just walk around the city in his army uniform. Some people would shout at him and call him names, such as “baby-killer.” He became very angry, he remembers. Back in Vietnam, no one talked about right or wrong. And if anyone asked why they were there, the answer was just to fight Communism.

“By the time my thirteen and a half months in Vietnam were up, I was already saying, we shouldn’t be here,” he says. “There was no reason. People had died. Afterward, I started to read about the war. What was it about? I didn’t feel anything but anger.”

After that, he followed the example of a lot of Vietnam veterans—he put his photos, and by extension his feelings, in a box under the bed and tried to forget about them for the next thirty years.

Many Vietnam vets still feel disenfranchised and unremembered by anyone except the soldiers who fought alongside them. And that’s part of the message in *Remember Me*. It was what they promised each other every time they stepped out on patrol—if something happens, remember me, remember who I was and how I died. Collins remembers all too well. But reconciling those memories has been another story.

COLLINS HAS SPENT his adult life as an artist, arts curator, and art dealer. He has shown at Matrix, East End Gallery, Schoolhouse Gallery, and Larry Collins Fine Art, and is currently represented by Art Market Provincetown (AMP). He was honored with a retrospective exhibit, *Larry R. Collins: Finding Light*, at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum in 2010.

His current studio is in a large high-ceilinged room over the US Post Office in Provincetown. It is filled with reference books, notebooks, stacks of canvases, and works in progress. Easels vie for floor space with mannequins and worktables. Tall windows let in the filtered Cape Cod light that bounces off the surrounding bay. There is a bookcase with several shelves dedicated to the war. Handwritten tags on the shelves categorize the books as being about War, War Photography, or, simply, Valor.

In this room, he created most of the canvases that were shown in the Amarillo exhibit. But how did a New England artist’s war experience in

Vietnam turn into a major exhibit all the way down in Texas? Some of his Vietnam photographs had been shown previously, and a few were already in museum collections, such as the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. But *Remember Me* was a far bigger exhibition of Collins's art and a much more comprehensive view of his vision and experiences.

It all started with two of his collectors, Whitney Kelly and Jim Kemp, who have bought artwork from Collins over the years, including copies of his Vietnam photos. Kelly was head of the board of the Amarillo museum when he proposed a Vietnam show. Collins said he didn't expect it to happen, but then the curator called and confirmed: "We are having a show of your photos from Vietnam, 1968–69." Eventually, the more recent paintings were added in—those he had done when he started to deal with his post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)—along with the other ephemera.

Two other friends, Calvin Tsao and Zack McKown—architects known for their museum and exhibition design work, including a museum in China's Forbidden City—wanted to help. They created a mock-up of the Amarillo museum's exhibition space and worked with Collins and museum curator Alex Gregory to plan for the final layout.

The paintings in the show range from violent landscapes to idealized portraits of the men he knew. In the portraits, the men are forever young, forever hopeful, graceful, even beautiful. Collins used a Greek style of portraiture in which the image is a perfected person physically but with specific elements that recall the actual person, like the very blond hair of the young man in *The Golden Boy* or the expressive eyes of another soldier in *Friendly Fire*.

Eileen Myles, in her interview with Collins for the exhibition catalogue, describes one painting, 1968, and how it exemplifies the artist's landscapes: "The big one of the ocean ('1968'), dark and passionate yet frozen, ominously, functions like an 'emblem' (his word) of the rest."

In the Vietnam landscapes, Collins wanted to convey his feeling of being a prisoner in a dangerous place. "I wanted every element of the painting to be threatening," he says of 1968. "The water, the waves are like spikes, they are like the tails of scorpions. The rain comes down like



DJ, 1968, gelatin silver print, 20 by 16 inches

"These paintings are what I would call 'ideal portraits.' They're like what the Greeks would do—make a portrait of somebody who died to be put up in the cemetery. This is Scotty. What I remembered about him was his blond hair, how striking this big mass of blond hair was—the sun just reflected off of his head and it was beautiful. There's this big Roman bronze of Hercules in the Vatican, and when I was doing this I thought, that's it, you're going to do a picture of a bronze, and all of it's going to be gold-plated to stand for him."

— from the catalogue for *Remember Me*



The Golden Boy, 2016, oil on canvas, 40 by 30 inches

bullets. The water is like tar. There is nowhere to escape, nowhere to go." Collins pauses for a moment and adds with a laugh, "This is not a couch painting."

The show in Amarillo seemed a fitting bookend to a lifelong arts career that in some ways started in Vietnam.

THE AMERICAN PARTICIPATION in the Vietnam War began in 1950 and continued until 1975 with the fall of Saigon. It had transitioned into an American war in the early '60s when advisors sent in troops on the ground. It was at this point that Collins finished college, with an arts degree from the University of Oklahoma, and was called up to serve in the army.

"In 1967 I graduated and was drafted immediately," he says. "In February 1968, I was in Vietnam in the infantry. I thought, 'They won't put me in the infantry, I have a college degree.' But they didn't care. I got there right after the Tet Offensive and went right into the field."



A Shau Valley, ca. 2009, oil on canvas, 16 by 20 inches

But a chance meeting with another soldier changed everything.

"Before we went out, the company clerk lined us up and asked, 'Is anyone here an artist?' I raised my hand. He walked over and said, 'Remember me. I know where they are going to need an artist in thirty days.'"

They gave Collins a quick on-the-spot drawing test that he apparently passed. But he soon forgot the encounter and focused on staying alive out on patrol. They never knew when the next attack would be or where it would come from. The enemy often popped out of what they called "spider holes" by the side of the road, holes just big enough for a single enemy soldier and his gun. Or the attack could come from the forest or the top of the hill or even behind the platoon. Bombs fell all the time, sometimes theirs, sometimes ours. Over the following month, Collins became friends with the other men in his platoon. They often shared makeshift tents called "hooches," sparse structures made out of their ponchos, where they sheltered from the almost constant rain. Small comforts like these, Collins recalls, were sometimes all they had to hold onto.

One day, to his surprise, the company clerk made good on his promise.

"I had been on patrol, what they called 'search and destroy,' when a message came down from the front," Collins says. "I went up and the captain said, 'I don't know how you did it, but you are out of here. Get on the next chopper back to base.'"

Collins still remembers what that moment was like. "I didn't even get a chance to say good-bye to my friends," he says. "I just got on the next chopper. What I remember most now is how their faces dropped before I left."

Each of the men he left wished they were the ones getting out. And it was the last time he saw some of them alive.

"When I was pulled out to be a combat illustrator, I was sent to a safer place, a base camp, Camp Evans, but it was not safe," he says. "There were still rockets exploding and people getting killed around you. I was out of the field, but I still felt connected to my squad. I put together a care package, rations and cigarettes, in a box and took it to headquarters to send it off on a helicopter that was taking food out to my guys.

"Then, later, I went back to headquarters to see if they got it. I walked into a tent and I could see the dread on the men's faces. I asked if the squad had gotten the box, and a chaplain came over and asked me, 'Didn't you hear? There was an ambush in the A Shau Valley and more than half of the company was killed or wounded.' Then he added, 'They did get your package before they were killed.' I can hardly repeat it now." Collins chokes up remembering that moment. "The next day I sat down at my drawing table and did nothing. I stayed there and did nothing for days, and then I realized I had to get it together or be replaced and be sent back out there. So I stuffed it. I had to."

The bodies of three men in his squad could not be recovered and never have been. The surprise attack lasted all night and the Americans had to retreat before dawn or risk losing the rest of the company. The memory of those missing men, Hubia (Huby) Guillory from New Orleans, David Scott from Illinois, and Daniel Kelley from Dorchester is always close at hand for Collins.

"You go into guilt right away. You go to this place where it is your fault that they died. They were better than you. You should have died—not them," he recalls. "I asked someone once, do you know how to survive? The guy told me, 'Just do everything you have been taught. Don't fuck up. Those are the people who are killed, the ones who fuck up.'" Huby, whose body was never recovered, is the one who told him that.

Collins finished his military service as a combat illustrator, but he also started taking photographs. Initially, he thought he'd use them as studies for paintings when he got home, but he treated each one as a well-composed story. At first glance, the images seem like casual snapshots, but as you study them more closely, you soon realize there is much more being revealed. Each of the young men in the photos looks like the boy next door, but saddled with weariness. They are worn down by their experiences and yet have to keep going. They carry on. They get their hair cut, they drink and smoke and laugh between firefights. They dig holes and pile sandbags under a makeshift roof to keep bombs from blowing them up while they sleep.

There's even a little humor. Someone put up a sign at base camp that said "Reenlistment Office." Most people did not reenlist, though Collins did extend his tour by a month and a half. It was a calculated risk. By doing that, he cut his remaining time in service to under six months, and if you come off of an active tour of duty with less than six months to serve, they send you home. They sent him home.

Back in the States, Collins made his way to New York City and started taking part in protest marches there. He remembers hearing Buffy Sainte-Marie's song *The Universal Soldier* and realizing for the first time that society was willing to put the blame for the war not just on US policy but on the back of each soldier. It made no sense to him. Therapy helped him to begin to sort it out.

"One time I was talking with a psychologist, and he wanted to know if I wanted to talk about Vietnam. I said, 'Why?' Then I told him the story about being in the field, and then being called to the front and put on the helicopter. I just started to cry."

He later asked the psychologist, "Do you think I have PTSD?"

The doctor answered, "Yes, I diagnosed you with that the first time you came in."

It wasn't easy to sift through the layers of emotions and put them to rest.

"There were all these feelings that I had never let come up," he says. "People tend to think that when you have PTSD that you think you are back on the battlefield. You don't. You are back in those emotions. When someone would die in the field, you would grab the body, throw it on a chopper, and not talk about it. Like it didn't matter. That is how you coped. Man up. Get over it. That is a recipe for disaster."

One day, Collins was invited to a Vietnam veterans' reunion. He didn't plan to go, until his therapist said he should. Collins's commanding officer, James "Mike" Sprayberry (a first lieutenant during the battle who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroism there), had called and told Collins that some of the men who had been in the ambush that killed his friends would be there. Sprayberry has gone back to Vietnam several times looking for those whose bodies were not recovered.

"I started going to the reunions," Collins says. "I thought these guys would hate me because I

“I was just walking around with my camera—that’s how I did these things. I saw these guys, and I saw this beautiful light. He’s cutting hair, so I said ‘freeze.’ And they loved posing because there wasn’t anything else to do, and someone paid attention to them like they’re special.” — *from the catalogue for Remember Me*



Haircut, 1968, Camp Evans, Vietnam, chromogenic print, 16 by 20 inches

got out. They didn’t. They were glad to see me. I don’t agree with a lot of them politically, but we are not there to talk about that. We are there to talk about what we went through.”

In 2009, Sprayberry asked Collins to join him on a recovery mission and they went back to Vietnam. They met Norman Lloyd who was making *Fallen But Not Forgotten*, a documentary about the soldiers who were missing in action, and both Sprayberry and Collins wound up being featured in the film. They all went to the A Shau Valley, where the ambush had taken place, and found the spot where the men from his squad had died.

“I took some stones from the beach in

Provincetown and buried them where they fell,” Collins says.

He also found a piece of shrapnel when he buried the stones, and he knows he was meant to find it. He brought it home. “I don’t feel closure but I do feel closer to them, like I did something for them,” he says. “They will know. They will know we came back for them.”

SUE HARRISON writes fiction, memoir, and nonfiction. Her travel essays and memoirs about Florida can be found on her website, myoldflorida.com. She is a prizewinning journalist and was the arts and entertainment editor and writer for the Provincetown Banner, a weekly newspaper in Massachusetts, for fifteen years.



Installation shot, *Remember Me*, the Amarillo Museum of Art in Amarillo, Texas

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Pioneer of Provincetown

DEWING WOODWARD AND THE CAPE COD SCHOOL OF DRAWING AND PAINTING

By Mary Sieminski and Melissa Renn

WHILE CHARLES HAWTHORNE AND HANS HOFMANN are familiar names to many in Provincetown, much less well known is that of Dewing Woodward, a woman and artist who founded the first school of art in Provincetown in 1896. Although the *New York Times* in 1950 referred to her as “one of the nation’s leading painters,” Woodward is conspicuously absent from most histories of art and of Provincetown. This essay, which draws upon recent archival findings and research, focuses on her role in the formation of the Provincetown art colony. We hope it will encourage future work on her fascinating life and art.

Born in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, in 1856, Martha Dewing Woodward was the youngest of eight children of John Vanderbilt Woodward (1809–1886) and Wealthy Ann York Woodward (1816–1905). The Woodwards were a prominent and founding family of this north central Pennsylvania frontier town.

Dewing Woodward began painting at the age of eleven. Her parents were supportive of her passion for art and even built a studio for her above the kitchen in their home. She studied briefly at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1887 and participated in its Annual Exhibitions in 1889 and 1891. Her first teaching position, beginning in 1882, was at the Female Institute at Lewisburg (which later became part of Bucknell University), where she taught a range of courses, from drawing to china decoration.

In 1888, Woodward left Lewisburg for the first of many trips she would take to France. In 1889, she returned to the United States and was appointed the head of the art department at the Women’s College of Baltimore (later Goucher College). She would go on to serve as principal of the School of Art from 1891 to 1892. Active in the local art community, Woodward was also a member of Baltimore’s Water-Color Club and the Charcoal Club of Baltimore.

In 1892, Woodward left her position at the Women’s College and returned again to France, this time with her partner, Louise Johnson. Johnson, who was also originally from Williamsport, was Woodward’s companion for over thirty years. She, too, was an artist and exhibited her work at venues in Williamsport, Pennsylvania; Woodstock, New York; and Miami, Florida.

In Paris, Woodward enrolled in the Académie Julian, which at that time, unlike the École des Beaux-Arts, accepted women students. Founded in 1867 by Rodolphe Julian, the private art school attracted students from around the world, including American artists Cecilia Beaux, Ellen Day Hale, Childe Hassam, William McGregor Paxton, and Robert Henri. While in Paris, Woodward studied with Jules Lefebvre, Tony Robert-Fleury, and William Bouguereau and exhibited her work in juried shows. Around this time, Woodward dropped her given name “Martha” and chose to exhibit under her middle name, “Dewing.” Later she would legally change her name. As writer Germaine Greer later remarked in her 1979 study of women painters, artists “like Claude Lorraine and Dewing



Dewing Woodward, ca. 1925
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION. COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI LIBRARIES, CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA

Woodward [noted] with glee how often their work was taken to be by a man.”¹

In 1896, Woodward and Johnson made their first visit to Provincetown. Woodward may have learned about Provincetown—known for its scenic harbor, charming town, spectacular dunes, and accepting community—from other American artists while she was studying in Paris. She was in fact one of the earliest artists—along with William F. Halsall, William Paxton, and Childe Hassam—to visit the remote fishing village, which had become accessible by train in 1873. As Ted Robinson wrote, “Even before 1900, painters had discovered the Cape’s End; the sea and dunes were wonderful, living was cheap, and the place was hard to get to.”²

Given her penchant for plein-air painting, Woodward may also have come to Provincetown (and stayed) because of the remarkable Cape light. As a 1913 article later stated: “Miss Woodward specializes in the nude in landscape, compositions in sunlight and open air effect. It is her aim to depart from the skylight and studio traditions and portray the beauty

of the nude in close relation with nature.”³

Woodward established the Cape Cod School of Drawing and Painting in 1896, which predated Charles W. Hawthorne’s Cape Cod School of Art by three years. As a July 26, 1896, article in the *Boston Post* announced: “A summer school of drawing and painting has been opened at Harbor Side in charge of Miss Dewing Woodward of New York. A dozen students are at work and find our fishing hamlet full to overflowing with rare subjects for their sketches.” That same summer, Woodward and Johnson built a cottage and studio they called the “Pungo,” at the west end of Commercial Street, near where the Provincetown Inn now stands. They also owned several other cottages, including the “Willows” and “Kedge.” An 1896 work by Woodward, *Old Maids Pink, Cape Cod*, was just acquired by the Provincetown Art Association and Museum. It depicts two shingled cottages nestled high in the dunes—the clever title may also allude to Woodward and Johnson’s relationship. Woodward would later publish *Some Adventures of Two Vagabonds* in 1908, under the pseudonym Wealthy Ann York (which was also her mother’s maiden name). The book offers insight into their experiences as women artists living and working on Cape Cod at the turn of the century.

Woodward painted and taught for at least five summers in

Provincetown. Her school attracted artists from around the world and played a significant part in establishing Provincetown as a destination for the avant-garde. Her students included the Norwegian-born artist Jonas Lie, who spent one summer in Provincetown. Lie, whom Woodward described as having a “keen feeling for form and color,”⁴ first met Woodward through Felix Adler’s Ethical Culture School in New York. Lie would continue to work with her throughout his career and later served as vice president of Woodward’s Blue Dome Fellowship in Woodstock, New York. Woodward participated in many different Modernist circles. In 1897, for instance, she was invited to give a lecture on “How to See a Picture” at the Twentieth Century Club in Pittsburgh.

Like many other artists who would come to Provincetown, Woodward painted the local landscape, architecture, and community. Her *Clam-Diggers Coming Home—Cape Cod* (n.d.) was shown in Venice in 1903. In 1899, Woodward closed her school in Provincetown and returned to Europe. The *Provincetown Advocate* lamented, “Many have enjoyed the privilege each year of attending exhibitions at this studio. Some of our local artists have been instructed by Miss Woodward. With regret Provincetown learns that these pleasant acquaintances will not be with us the coming summer but trust at a future date they may again visit Provincetown.”⁵ Clearly a central figure in the community, Woodward was sincerely missed by her students and peers. She would, however, remain connected to the coastal art colony and returned often over the years. She exhibited three works—*Provincetown*, *Wren Tower*, and *Flowers*—at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum in the 1920s.

Woodward continued to seek out bohemian artist communities, and in 1907 she and Johnson moved to Shady, New York, where they started a new artist colony, the Blue Dome Fellowship, devoted to the study of the figure *en plein air*. Woodward likely chose Shady for its proximity to the Arts and Crafts colony Byrdcliffe in Woodstock, which was a haven for many prominent women artists and writers. Founded in 1902 by Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead and his wife, Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead, the colony attracted, among many others, feminist writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman, designer and artist Zulma Steele, and Modernist artist and Provincetown printer Blanche Lazzell.

In a 1917 brochure, Johnson described the Blue Dome Fellowship as “an association of artists and students affiliated for mutual benefit in the study of light and color under the open sky.” As Catskills historian Alf Evers noted, the colony was also “novel in that it was directed by women and taught the painting of nude female models in the open air.”⁶ Woodward’s *Listening to the Footsteps of Autumn*, an impressionistic oil painting depicting a female nude standing in a forest framed by fall leaves, exemplifies the type of painting she taught and practiced while at Blue Dome. American dancer Isadora Duncan was also at Byrdcliffe around the same time that Woodward was in Shady, and Woodward definitely knew her peer, the modern dancer Vaslav Nijinsky. The New York Public Library has a copy of Woodward’s 1911 *The Mass of the Shepherds of Provence*, which she inscribed to him.

In 1912, Woodward’s studio, which she called “a crazy sort of Log House at Shady-in-the-Catskills,” caught fire and “burned down with [her] life work.”⁷ She lost not only the majority of her art, but also her library, lectures, and teaching materials. The experience was devastating, as Woodward recounted: “I collapsed—did not touch a brush for four years. This was in 1912. Had just been to France to close our studios and bring everything home to spend the rest of my life here, and the cases were not yet unpacked.”⁸ Although she and Johnson tried to rebuild their lives in Shady after the fire, it must have been particularly difficult for them, since they had gone through a similar experience in Provincetown just five years earlier, when the Pungo, built on the high dune at One Commercial Street, burned to the ground in 1907. This was followed by a fire at the Kedge in 1908, which also resulted in the loss of many of their possessions, as well as much of Woodward’s art and writings.

Around 1917, Woodward and Johnson closed the school in Shady and moved to Miami for a fresh start. Once settled, Woodward began painting again, focusing on images of local Florida flora and fauna. When the University of Miami in Coral Gables opened in 1926, Woodward headed the art program there. She also established the Blue Dome



Dewing Woodward, *Listening to the Footsteps of Autumn*, n.d., oil on canvas, 48 by 25³/₈ inches. COLLECTION OF THE POULTNEY BIGELOW HOMESTEAD

Fellowship in Coral Gables in 1919 and served as president of the Florida Federation of Art in 1928. In the 1930s, Woodward found employment through the Works Progress Administration (WPA), serving as a director for the Index of American Design in Florida and painting murals, including *Migration*, which portrayed Seminole life, for the Coral Gables Woman’s Club (now in the collection of the HistoryMiami Museum).

Woodward lived in Coral Gables and continued to paint, as the March 16, 1946, issue of the *Brooklyn Eagle* reported, for “six hours a day,” up until her death in 1950. While a 1949 article quoted her as saying that she painted “just for the pleasure of working,” art was certainly much more than a pastime for her.⁹ It was her passion, and her art and teaching clearly inspired others, from Provincetown to New York to Miami. Although she self-effacingly described herself and her partner as “two vagabonds,” Woodward was no mere wanderer—she was a trailblazer. 📌

MARY SIEMINSKI, a Williamsport, Pennsylvania, resident and frequent Provincetown visitor, has published on Dewing Woodward through her role as manager of the Lycoming County Women’s History Collection. This essay is drawn from her extensive archival research on Woodward.

MELISSA RENN has published widely on the Provincetown art colony, including a recent essay on Morris Davidson and an essay on the American avant-garde on *Cape Cod in the Provincetown Art Association and Museum’s 2015 catalogue, A Century of Inspiration*.

Notes:

1. Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979): 320.
2. Ted Robinson, *The Beachcombers* (Provincetown, MA: Advocate Press, 1947): 7.
3. Unsigned, “What the Art Schools Are Doing,” *Arts & Decoration* 3, no. 6 (April 1913): 209.
4. Dewing Woodward, “He [sic] Knew Jonas Lie,” *Art Digest* 14 (May 1940): 13.
5. “Fifty Years Ago: January 19, 1899,” *Provincetown Advocate*, January 20, 1949: 2.
6. Alf Evers, *Woodstock: History of an American Town* (Overlook Press, 1987): 451.
7. Dewing Woodward to “Friends of years ago,” September 21, 1942, in Dewing Woodward File, Bertrand Library Special Collections/University Archives, Bucknell University.
8. Ibid.
9. Frances Wrobel, “Art’s ‘Little Old Lady’ Captures Airy Grace of Florida Birds,” *The Miami Sunday News*, September 11, 1949: 6B.

The Fantastic World of Joey Mars

By Steve Siddle

IN JUNE 1990, Joey Mars drove his motorcycle from Worcester to Provincetown to see about a job at Daddy Rabbit Comics. What struck him most about that journey was the mural Bob Gasoi had painted on Shop Therapy, an eclectic head shop that occupied a two-story building on Commercial Street.

When I recently met with Mars in his Barnstable studio to discuss his journey, his inspirations, and his upcoming show at the Woodman/Shimko Gallery that opens this July, he talked about his initial reaction to the art that covered the Shop Therapy building: “Fantastic, muralled sea creatures, monsters, pop-culture icons, gods and goddesses from Greece, Tibet, India, Mexico, as well as political figures from past and present danced in psychedelic balance of mayhem, madness, and magic.”

Drawn to Provincetown—in part by the dream of one day selling his T-shirts and stickers on Commercial Street—Mars would go on to become a partner in the comic book shop for the summer. Riding down from Worcester every week, he would work in Provincetown during the day and play in the dunes at night under the stars. “It was a great summer of art, music, nature, and friends in Provincetown,” he said.

EACH ARTIST’S STUDIO is unique. And “Mars world” is like no other. Walls, countertops, and even cans of paint seem to come to life with



(above) *Everybody Has a Story*, 2018, acrylic and oil on canvas, 36 by 48 inches
(below) *Avante Garden Remix*, 2017, print from a digital drawing, 8 by 10 inches

strange faces and iridescent typography. Large and small completed paintings stand stacked against each wall. Bookshelves sag, weighted with wisdom. Tabletops hide beneath layers of paper. Bear-like, Mars himself looms and lumbers through his labyrinth of canvas and paint. He moves from one painting to another, pointing out hidden symbols and new techniques.

Mars’s art is engaging and pleasant to look at—it draws you right in with bright colors, bold shapes, numbers and symbols, and unexpected bursts of life. A rabbit, a cat, a face in the landscape. Everywhere, there are signs of a curious mind at work. Strange creatures swim into his ken: a detached floating mouth and spine, extraterrestrial cacti, hieroglyphic vines. One can’t help but wonder: what are the roots of art like this, and where does this sort of imagination come from?

As a young man, Mars was powerfully drawn to the vibrant surrealism of underground

comics and the psychedelic art of album covers. His love for cartoonists like Sergio Aragonés and Ed “Big Daddy” Roth soon developed into a fine appreciation of the works of Salvador Dalí and Picasso. Upon graduating high school, Mars moved to Boston and began his studies at the Vesper George School of Art. Named for the outspoken plein-air artist Vesper Lincoln George, this small Back Bay college provided Mars with a focused curriculum of drawing and design.

“Vesper George was a great foundation of painting, life drawing, and graphics,” he explained. “They taught you how to dream and design and how to use color.”

After Vesper George, Mars went on to study drawing at the Art Institute of Boston and began to work on local concert posters for the blossoming alternative music scene in Boston. Strange, fun, and full of life, Mars’s posters soon developed a following. Featuring a wide range of bands, from small and independent bands like the Lemonheads and Buffalo Tom to Pearl Jam and the Grateful Dead, Mars’s concert posters became iconic.

People don’t usually plan to move to Worcester—it just happens to be where they land. And so it was that Mars found himself living back in the city of his birth and working with a community of eccentrics who formed the Worcester Artist Group (WAG), which featured gallery





exhibitions, performance art, and jazz, folk, dance, and rock concerts. It also provided affordable studio space. Mars remembers those years as an extremely formative and fruitful time: “It was like the Peace Corps for artists. Everyone was working in something wild.”

In a club on Lansdowne Street, Mars met the man whose Provincetown storefront had blown his mind. Ronny Hazel was a local entrepreneur with a taste for the eclectic. The two became fast friends and conspirators and, with the help of Hazel’s connections, Mars would widen his circle of influence significantly. Hazel introduced Mars to several of his distributors for rock ‘n’ roll merchandise, which led to worldwide distribution of a line of T-shirts and posters that put Joey Mars art in malls across America for much of the ‘90s. Most importantly though, their friendship would tighten Mars’s connection with Shop Therapy and Provincetown.

Mars would replace Gasoi’s fading mural with his own designs in 2010, and when Shop Therapy moved in 2012 into the historic building that housed the Star Theater, Mars christened the building with a new mural. Now, in 2018, he is designing a third new look for Shop Therapy with characters from his latest creations.

Mars calls his newest creations *Cash Money Aliens*. In what began as a sort of grotesque comic strip, Mars’s characters come to life. Among cosmic fauna and bar codes, mysterious phrases float in the sky: Mushroom Pi, Orange Cat Sky, and How We Got to Now! Mars describes *Cash Money Aliens* as “a highly stylized graphic montage of hand-drawn and collaged surreal figures with gestures to post-punk, no wave, futuristic sci-fi, Day of the Dead, with a backdrop of distorted, abstracted, textured Pop Art noise.” The world of *Cash Money Aliens* is a wild one indeed, but enough like our own to jolt the viewer with a shock of recognition. It’s as if some alien culture appropriated our national idiolect and stole the lingua franca of the new century.

There is an evident duality to Mars’s work; while much of the most recognizable images seem playful and bright, the newer creations offer a darker glimpse of a distorted world. According to Mars: “The other road is a darker, chaotic highway of sharp edits, twisted realities, mixed-up dimensions, bar codes, numbers, poems, spray paint, acrylic oil stick, collage, abstracted textures, future technology, grotesque characters with violent brushstrokes, spatters, and drips reflecting today’s time line.”

Yet, there is also a hopeful aspect to *Cash Money Aliens*. Hidden beneath the disparate images and cosmic monsters and enigmatic messages may lie instructions that will lead us toward a better tomorrow. Perhaps there are clues on how to choose between the magic mushroom and the fruit of the poisonous tree.

“It seems the only way to get ahead of the madness is to match the madness punch for punch,” Mars says, “and throw it back out into the ether to see if it can live on its own instead of in my head.”

You can find out more about Joey Mars and see more of his work at joeymars.com.

STEVE SIDDLE is a Worcester writer who dreams of becoming a writer who used to live in Worcester. He has written for *blank canvas* magazine since 2005, where he publishes a weekly column, *So Worcester, It Hurts*. Artwork based on his poems was featured this spring in an exhibition, *18 in the 21st: Selected Works, 2000–2018*, at the *Sprinkler Factory* gallery in Worcester.



(clockwise from top left) *Cash Money Aliens* #472, 2018, mixed-media digital collage, 9 by 13 inches; *Defacing the Future*, 2018, spray paint and enamel on canvas, 24 by 18 inches; *Encounter with the Purple Cat*, 2018, enamel, acrylic, oil stick, and spray paint on canvas, 36 by 48 inches

Completing the Vision of an Image

MASTER PRINTMAKER BOB KORN GIVES NEW LIFE TO COLOR

By Greg O'Brien

YOU CAN'T MISS BOB KORN. He is the distinguished-looking man in his sixties, with the myopic air of Mr. Magoo, maneuvering a Pugsley fat bike down Main Street in Orleans, a small Mid-Cape town in Massachusetts. Yet, at second glance, perhaps Bob has the look of an aging rock star, wearing his trademark baggy jean shorts, a bright plaid shirt buttoned tightly to the neck, and an earring—a silver hoop the color of his long curly hair and grey beard. Bob has been wearing an earring since his late teens. "It was just a way of reinforcing independence," he says, noting this attitude is the story of his life. Bob, a Renaissance man, is still sovereign in his gut in all good ways. To say that Bob Korn is a free spirit is to say that Michelangelo was good with a brush—the understatement is stunning.

Korn, owner of Bob Korn Imaging and the Gallery UPSTAIRS in Orleans—one of the most highly regarded imaging studios in the United States—is a study, full circle, in contrasts. As a master photographic and digital printmaker for nearly forty years, he has adapted to the constant change of technology, while still using techniques imbedded in old school photographic printmaking, preserving the fine art of the print. Korn himself stands out visually like his art, but he labors in anonymity at the top of his profession. The awards, recognition, and accolades all go to the photographers; Bob's fine work enables the prizes. He is the printer of choice for many of the nation's top photographers for elite submissions, such as Guggenheim fellowships and the National Endowment of the Arts, and portfolios to world-renowned museums, including the Smithsonian, the Getty Museum, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the National Gallery of Art in DC, the Art Institute of Chicago, Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, and the Cen-

tre Pompidou in France. Collaborating with award-winning photographers, Korn has had print work appear in such publications as *National Geographic*, *Time*, *LIFE*, *Look*, *Esquire*, *Rolling Stone*, *Playboy*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, and the *New Yorker*. In addition, his prints, including portraits of some of the most eminent leaders and luminaries of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, have been featured in scores of fine-art photography books.

Korn's collaboration itself is a work of art, starting many years ago in Provincetown with Joel Meyerowitz, whose photography has appeared in more than 350 exhibits around the world. Another collaborator, renowned Chicago portrait photographer Marc Hauser, describes Korn's technique: "Bob opens up the color. He has extraordinary instinct in color and light; you can't teach that." *National Geographic* photographer Cary Wolinsky describes Korn's touch as "intuitive," while Rowland Scherman, who served as the first photographer for the Peace Corps, says, "He helps us reach the highest level. One of Bob's many gifts is knowing the



Bob Korn on his Pugsley fat bike

parameters of an excellent print and how to achieve it." Perhaps Ansel Adams, an iconic black-and-white photographer of the 1900s, sums up this collaboration best: "The negative is the score, and the print is the performance."

SO HOW DOES A PRINTER on a Pugsley, who lives on an isolated sliver of sand on Cape Cod, preserve the art form of the photographic print at a time in our culture when digital flash and eye-popping glitz are commanding an audience and billions of photographs are taken with smartphones? It helps if you have the eye and the heart of a virtuoso and know a little Greek. The word *photography* has roots in the Greek words *photo*, meaning "light," and *graphia*, which translates as "writing" or "drawing." Thus, without light, there is no picture. This is often called "God's light"—daylight at all points.



Bob Korn's studio



A corner of the Gallery UPSTAIRS in Orleans



Joel Meyerowitz, *Porch, Provincetown*



Cary Wolinsky, *Snake and Baby*



David Burnett, *Salt Flats*



Rowland Scherman, *Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits*

Printmaking today, at the highest level, is a skilled and refined craft that reproduces the artist's vision using the most sophisticated software and print technologies available to adjust the image to make the finest print. In this evolving age of printmaking transition, Korn brings the sensitivity of the traditional photographic print into the digital age in ways beyond the work of most printers. "I use digital technologies to reproduce the traditional esthetic, discerning, as best I can, incredibly subtle differences in color and the quality of light," he says.

"He sees color like no one else. His gift is akin to a maestro on a piano. Bob sees color in that way; he can discern every note. That's what makes him different."

— *Photographer and filmmaker Robert Caputo*

print; if I do my job, I disappear as well."

Korn has been butting heads with the status quo for most of his professional life. His penchant for the subtleties of color and light are in clear evidence at his snug upstairs gallery on Main Street above the Orleans Whole Food Store. The floors of this studio are made of a narrow light pine, the walls are painted jute, and the ceilings are a blended shade of off-white, which delicately help to frame the works of art that hang on his exhibition walls. The works of master photographers are shown here year-round, and there are also presentations from the artists,



(above) Rick Ashley, *Michael*
(right) Installation view of Ashley's photographs in the National Portrait Gallery at the Smithsonian





Robert Caputo, *Elephants, Tsavo National Park*



Robert Frason, *Sophia Loren*



Marc Hauser, *John Waters*



Jim Dow, *Dairy Queen*

followed by receptions. This summer, there will be an exhibition featuring work by the American photojournalist David Burnett.

Adding to the relaxed vibe, a muted mix of the greats from jazz, blues, and R&B play in the background. Bob is almost zen-like as he talks about his profession, thoughtfully measuring his words in ways that belie his fervor for the craft. This is a discipline, perhaps, of staying within himself, the mark of a good artist or writer: Let a good story, or photographic print, speak for itself. Leave the hyperbole at the door.

"I print what photographers see, bringing to completion the vision of the image," Korn tells me when I visit his studio. "With the digital process available now, some think they can buy tools that give them the ability to create art. That's the difference today between the dabbler and the artist. Just because you have a tool doesn't mean

"Bob is an interpreter in much the way a fine editor leads a writer, or a director guides an actor in knowing the process, in making it more precise."

— Award-winning photographer Jim Dow

you know how to use it; having a scalpel doesn't mean you're a surgeon. It's the same thing in creating a print. If done correctly, printmaking expresses the passion of the photographer; if not printed with great care, the vision is lost."

In life, Bob has always taken the road less traveled. His life's journey sounds a bit like a circuitous train schedule: from Buffalo to Boston, to Topsfield, to Rockport, and to Orleans, where he rides his bike to work from his house on Bakers Pond Road. The youngest of three children, Bob was born and raised in Buffalo, New York.

His father, Mort, now ninety-five, was a salesman for a family business; his mother, Annette, now deceased, was a stay-at-home mom. Family and artistic success have always been more essential to Bob than earthly treasures. He met his wife, Donna, many years ago, and he is still always by her side. In fact, she's the manager of Main Street Books, which is adjacent to the gallery. The couple have two grown children: daughter Palmer, who works in fund-raising development in Washington, DC, and son Tyler, a producer in sports television.

"I grew up in a time when success was always measured in finances—that's how one was judged," Bob says. "I suppose it's the same today. I never got that memo. I would tell my children that we were rich in love and family, to which they would reply in jest, 'Dad, a little cash would be nice, too!'"

Community service has also been the coin of Bob and his wife. Donna is a children's advocate, a founder of the Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School and a member of the Orleans Special Needs Council. Bob has been active in the Cape Cod Baseball League for twenty-five years, serving years ago as president of the Orleans Cardinals, now the Orleans Firebirds, and has mentored at Nauset Regional High School in photography and printmaking.

In his art, Bob carries a heavy responsibility these days. From his second-floor sanctuary, he is helping to preserve, using the latest technologies, an art form that dates back centuries (engraving goes back to prehistoric times) and is danger to some degree of dissipating in the shortcuts and manipulations of the twenty-first century. No one would argue that many of today's digitally manipulated images aren't impressive. Use various applications and presto—the sky can morph, landscape can vanish or appear like magic, images can be altered or perfectly exposed, and some advanced cameras will even take photographs on automatic at three wholly distinct exposures at the same time. It's become easy to make an image the way you wish it to be, not the way it is.

While the advances in technology are impressive, many photographers agree there can be a dark side to this, a blurring of the lines between fine art and fine-art photography, and even question whether art made by these means is still photography in any real sense at all. Weary of such trends, some photographers are now going back to creating prints in classic black and white. Still, the very best photographers feel confident in the future knowing they can still rely on Bob Korn's own brand of magic. "There will always be a place for genuine photography, the integrity of the art," says Jim Dow, an award-winning photographer and teacher. "There will always be a place for the Bob Korns in life."

You can't miss Bob. Next time you see him on his Pugsley, know that you've crossed paths with a genius. 📷

GREG O'BRIEN, the author and editor of several books, has written for national and regional publications, including the Huffington Post, Psychology Today, Time, the Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, and Runner's World. His latest book, On Pluto: Inside the Mind of Alzheimer's, won the 2015 Beverly Hills Award for Medicine, the 2015 International Book Award for Health, and was an Eric Hoffer Book Award finalist, as well as a finalist for the USA Best Book Awards. An expanded On Pluto edition, New Horizons, was released earlier this year and is being distributed by Viking Penguin/Random House and translated into several languages.

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The Way It Used to Was

THE NAPI VAN DERECK COLLECTION

By James Bakker



Napi Van Dereck with works from his collection

LIKE HIS COLLECTION of Provincetown art, Napi Van Dereck is a “uniquer.” Although he was born in Chicago, Napi was conceived right here on Captain Jack’s Wharf and, while in his mother’s womb, even bumped into Bette Davis at the Barnstormers’ Theater, which he now owns. His mother wasted no time getting him back to Provincetown in the summer of 1932. It is these early memories from his childhood that drew Napi to collecting images of historical Provincetown—or, as he calls it, “the way it used to was.”

Napi’s art collecting has much less to do with the talent or fame of the artists who created the works than it does with the subject matter. Each piece in his current collection tells a story, a piece of his own story—Napi describes his collecting passion as a search to gather “memories.” For instance, he has acquired several versions of the same subject by different artists, such as depictions of Mary Heaton Vorse’s house. These works reveal changes to

a large tree in her backyard, which was hit by lightning during the hurricane of 1938. Each painter brought a unique perspective and captured the view of her house much differently. The same may be said of other works in the collection, such as those depicting the old Cannery Wharf in various states of disrepair, including its ultimate demise, and both the Oldest Shoppe and the Johnson Street Cold Storage, which have long since been demolished.



Blanche Lazzell (1878–1956), *The Pile Driver*, 1945, color white-line woodblock print, 12 by 13 inches



Nancy M. Ferguson (1872–1967), ca. 1920s, *View from High Pole Hill Road*, oil on canvas, 32 by 40 inches

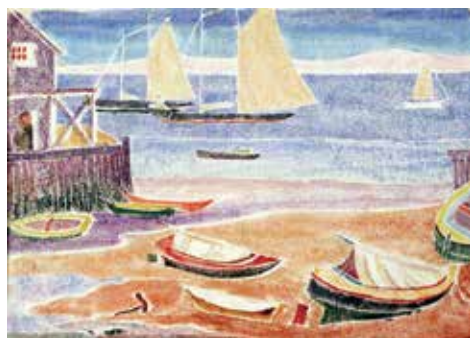
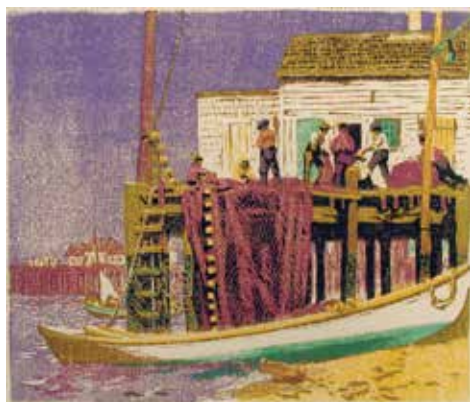
Napi and his wife, Helen, opened their restaurant, Napi’s, in 1975 and first started showing the work of Frank Milby and other local artists on the walls in the late ’70s. This inaugural exhibition sparked Napi’s interest in the idea of collecting art. Enlisting the help of Bob Baker, Napi added a second floor to the restaurant in the mid-’80s and the Eye of Horus Gallery took flight. He showed the work of other local artists—including George Yater, Bruce McKain, and Howard Mitcham—which worked out well for both the artists and Napi’s collection. In fact, Napi often wound up purchasing many of the works rather than returning them to the artists. And if he sold a piece, he almost always spent the money he received to buy another work by the same artist.

Napi and I first crossed paths in 1985, when he and Helen ventured across the Sagamore Bridge to attend one of my auctions in Cambridge. He was surprised and happy to learn that there were other people who actually knew about the Provincetown artists’ colony. We spent many an evening chatting in his office about collecting, while listening to *A Prairie Home Companion*. At Napi’s request, I agreed to conduct the 1988 first consignment auction for the Provincetown Art Association and Museum (PAAM). This was a turning point for both the PAAM auction and the Van Dereck collection. The auction would now limit consignments to works by deceased painters with a connection to Provincetown. And Napi now had an opportunity to acquire a wider selection of pieces by artists who were known and unknown, forgotten or overlooked.

The PAAM auctions helped to bring these artists back to the attention of the public, other collectors, and dealers. Prices escalated and bidding wars soon erupted. Business was good at the restaurant and, since Napi had no other vices, he would hold his bidding paddle high in the air until he had won the lots he had come to purchase. He once told me about a battle with Paul Resika at the annual PAAM consignment auction over a Charles Turner painting. Paul had exclaimed, “Do you really need to buy everything?” to which Napi replied, “No, just this one!” As the collection grew it soon became apparent Napi needed to find a focus and control his impulse to buy everything he liked.

One day, Napi received a call from a gentleman in Pennsylvania who offered to sell him a group of twelve oils depicting various views of Provincetown by Nancy Ferguson—one of

PHOTO BY VINCENT GUADAZZO



the Philadelphia Ten, who had summered in Provincetown in the early twentieth century—for \$100,000. So Napi said, “Nancy who?” and told him he didn’t have that kind of money. A few weeks later, the price dropped to \$50,000, but still no deal. A few months later, the gentleman told Napi the estate needed to be closed and asked how much he would be willing to pay. \$12,000. Sold.

Blanche Lazzell’s white-line print *The Pile Driver* and the graphite study for the print provide the anchor for Napi’s extensive Provincetown Printers collection. Also of note are the Gustave Baumann prints, which the artist made in Provincetown before he moved to New Mexico. The collection also includes great rarities, such as the only known white-line print by Reynolds Beal and a rare color print by Boston artist William Paxton.

It is a difficult task to single out specific works as being more noteworthy than others in order to illustrate the depth and importance of the collection. With over two hundred works in the collection, each piece, as in a puzzle, is equally important. Sharing the collection with the public has always been a priority for Napi and Helen for over twenty years, and numerous exhibitions featuring selections from the collection have been mounted at PAAM, the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum, the Cape Cod Museum of Art, and the Cahoon Museum of American Art. Individual works from the collection are frequently loaned to museums or featured and illustrated in publications about the Provincetown artists’ colony.

Napi and I have shared a common vision for many years that this collection should remain together on permanent display here in Provincetown. It is our dream that the collection will also serve as the nucleus for a greater collection of artwork, setting a standard for the stewardship and preservation of works by local artists, and encouraging others to bring more historic pieces back to Provincetown to further document the way it used to was. ☒

JAMES BAKKER is a trustee and past president of the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, past executive director of the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum, gallery owner, and auctioneer. He has served as the volunteer auctioneer for PAAM’s annual benefit auction since 1988 and has resided year-round in Provincetown since 2001. Bakker has curated numerous museum exhibitions and authored articles for the American Art Review, New England Antiques Journal, and Provincetown Arts.

(from top) Gustave Baumann (1881–1971), *Mending the Seine*, 1917, color woodblock print, 9 $\frac{5}{8}$ by 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches; Charles H. Turner (1848–1908), *Mackerel Fishing Fleet*, ca. 1880s, oil on canvas, 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ by 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; Reynolds Beal (1866–1951), *Provincetown Harbor*, 1915, color white-line woodblock print, 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ by 13 $\frac{15}{16}$ inches; George Yater (1910–1993), *Provincetown (Johnson Street) Cold Storage*, 1946, watercolor, 23 by 30 inches; Lillian B. Meeser (1864–1942), *The Oldest Shoppe*, ca. 1920s, oil on canvas, 12 by 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches

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No Cover, No Minimum

THE ARTIST AND POET JULIA SALINGER

By Megan Hinton

ART AND POETRY, perhaps more than other creative endeavors, reveal the inner workings of an artist. All of her insight, the artist's joy and struggle, is evident through the marking, the written word or drawing line, which delivers her experience to the work. An extraordinary collision and synthesis of these two realms is exemplified in the painting and poetry of artist Julia Salinger. Her intuitive marks and words transcend the act of mere observation and form a pictorial and narrative abstraction.

A longtime New Yorker, Salinger studied with and was mentored by the art historian Irving Sandler, who wrote *The Triumph of American Painting*. Her first poetry chapbook, *When I Awoke* (Scenic Route Productions, 2016), gives us a sense of her two mediums merging, as a free association of black-and-white drawings gently swirl through the words. In 2017, her paintings were included in an important group show at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts in New York City titled *Art on the Front Lines*, in which artists responded to the negative realities following the recent presidential election.

We can also see Salinger's relationship as poet and painter in a new poem, "The Box Poem," which describes a painter's pondering before starting studio work amidst materials and possibilities. It's as if her material has not been used for ages, but she quickly leads the reader into a sense of action and immediacy in the elements of color and line: "Explode the diagonal" and "Why do I use so much red?" It is in this description of Salinger's process, in her doing, that we find a poetic artist's statement.

Julia has many ties to the Lower Cape. Her family summered in Wellfleet when she was child, and she continued to return to the area over many years, finally moving to Wellfleet permanently in 2004. During the 1980s, she hosted a jazz radio show, *No Cover No Minimum*, on WOMR, Provincetown's Outermost Radio. The show reflected the important influence of music in Salinger's work, the beat that supports a poem's lyrical memory narrative. We'll have the chance to hear her express this lyricism in person this summer when she gives voice to her words in a reading of her work at the Wellfleet Public Library.

Julia and I met at her home and studio in Wellfleet this past winter to discuss what moves her as a painter and poet.



Julia Salinger

PHOTO BY RUSS ROWLAND

MEGAN HINTON: What was it like growing up in the Bronx in the 1960s and '70s?

JULIA SALINGER: I feel like I grew up during a rich time. Back then, parts of the Bronx were wrought with vacant lots, torn-down buildings, and burning fires. I saw my landscape as a surreal decaying backdrop where I could fill in the gaps. At the time, I was never afraid—it was just my environment.

MH: The scribbled and scratched look of your paintings is reminiscent of graffiti. Back then in the Bronx, it was a renaissance time of American graffiti, before it became labeled stylistically by the art world. Did the graffiti influence your work?

JS: I remember the graffiti artists going crazy, spray-painting in the middle of the night in the train yards in the low 200 streets. The newscasts were about "How to clean the subway cars" but I loved vandalism. I have fabulous memories of going on the elevated A train and seeing the whole strip of a train covered in graffiti. The moving train was like a huge animated flip book. The connection to my work lies in the words, sentences, symbols, and abstract lettering that convey a truth based on people's observations. I link the graffiti to Jean Dubuffet's paintings from the early twentieth century. His mark-making is strong but contrasts with a fragility that I am interested in exploring in my own work.

MH: When did you decide to become an artist?

JS: I started drawing and writing poetry at a young age. I didn't have a lot of toys, so I drew and built things. My mom was a single parent who involved me in house projects like stenciling, stripping furniture, and painting. I loved doing those things. I applied to art schools, but my parents weren't supportive, so, instead, I studied art history and chemistry. When I worked at the Ronald Feldman Gallery in the 1980s, I did research for Andy Warhol's print portfolios and curatorial work.



Why Do You Hear a Broken Branch Cry?, 2013, acrylic, marker, and Sumi ink on silk, 4 by 8 feet

Eventually, I worked in the music industry in New York City. All the while, I knew something of my own needed to come out of me. After my mother died, I started drawing and painting again. It was as if the floodgates lifted and let out all that was inside for so many years. Poetry happened for me later, because writing was private and a way to cope with the death of my parents and other relatives and key people in my life. In 2004, I took a poetry workshop with Martín Espada, which changed my world. Martín was very encouraging and helped me to develop my voice and let it come out.

MH: You came to Provincetown in the early 1980s before living in Manhattan, then relocated to Wellfleet in 2004. Can you describe your younger days in Provincetown and how it influenced you as an artist?

JS: My family came to Wellfleet to summer in the early '60s. I always begged my parents to take me to Provincetown, which was like going to Mecca compared to quiet Wellfleet. P-town was one big dress-up. People were free, wild, funky, and performative. There were artists, drag queens, queers, and the Portuguese. Such a diversity of people was a great carnival. I think there is something about the circus of Provincetown in its heyday that influenced my desire to not only make art and write but dress up!

MH: You are indeed known around P-town for your "costumes" and being playful with your wardrobe.

JS: As a kid, I loved fashion and my mom's fake jewelry. My parents entertained a lot, so I entertained guests by dancing and singing songs. I remember getting out of hand once while tap dancing to a Billie Holiday 78. Humor and dress-up played a huge role in how I coped with the harder side of my family life. Now, I often juxtapose this humor with the darker elements in my work.

MH: I see this juxtaposition in your poetry, which relies on memory to create a narrative. Can you describe the connection between working with

The Red Poem

The broken painter's box
Sits high on the mantel
Encrusted
With dirt, thread, wax
Old maps
Drawings in sepia
Blanket the inside
Large block letters
AGAIN
Explode along the diagonal
A stitched face hovers
Watching in a space of crimson lines
Why do you use so much red?
Red speaks to me
It is my anchor
All the discarded bits
Of life
Lay in salvation
In a flood of blood

poetic storytelling and the free association in your mark-making?

JS: I feel like making and writing are interrelated and one informs the other. Sometimes I have a flurry of working in the studio that opens up ideas or channels for poems. If I am touching on a deep feeling, like sadness or shame, after I exit the studio all those feelings are amplified. I am at my real core then and ready to write poetry.

MH: During your free association approach to painting or writing, do you ever question or have self-doubt about your output?

JS: When I am in the studio working, I am there with no judgment. I'm simply making marks, drawing, scratching in, and looking at the objects I collect, waiting for them to inspire me. Prior to getting to the studio, there is self-doubt. Anything that goes on in the studio, whether it

is of worth or does not feel useful, will be incorporated into another work.

MH: Speaking of the objects around your place that inspire you to work, I learned recently that you are also a sculptor. What generated this investigation of a multimedia-based combination of found object, drawing, collage, and text-based elements?

JS: As a kid, I used clay to make a bust of my mother and made a collage within the head to depict her thoughts. While studying art history, I was struck by Meret Oppenheim's fur teacup *Object*, Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades, and Joseph Cornell's shadow boxes. Dada gave me the permission to accept chance and use unrelated objects to tell a story.

My parents lived in Berne, Switzerland, for nine years while my dad was in medical school. They moved there for his studies because, at the time, Jewish people were not permitted to study medicine in American institutions. Because they were in Europe for so long, they had collected interesting objects in the house. Having a European sensibility and all of the collectibles influenced me to make these strange objects.

MH: Your glove series, in which you collage and draw on actual gloves, is a favorite of mine. Can you explain where your inspiration for making these came from?

JS: So far in my life, I have experienced a lot of death. For years, my sister and I sorted through the personal things people had left behind, the remains of the day. My mother left behind many pairs of gloves. I can remember her tiny hands fitting into the soft leather. When she died, so did the gloves. Drawing on them was a way to bring her back to life.

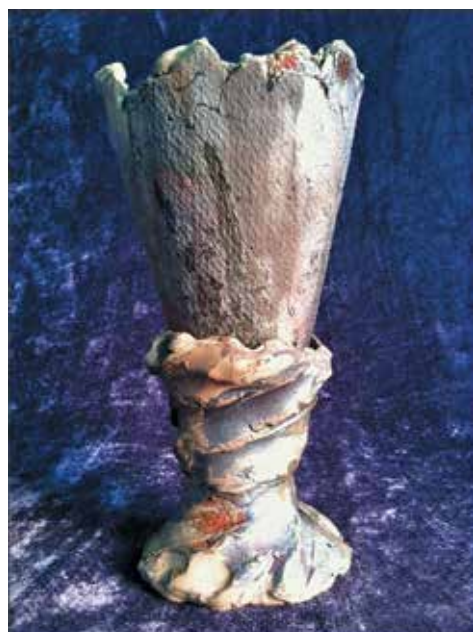
MH: I once heard you say, in response to a question about your thought process while making work, "Actually I wasn't thinking about



Dad's Last Words, 2006, IV bag, found materials, 10 by 7 inches

anything!” This kind of behavior is rooted in automatism, a concept from Surrealism in which the method of making is without conscious thought. Is there any level of thought, whether methodical or cognizant, contrary to this automatic working approach?

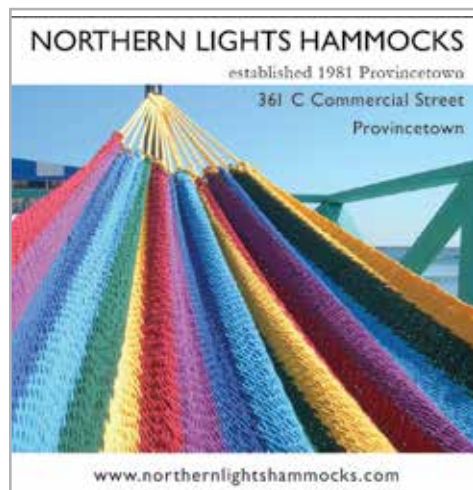
JS: I like to just dive in. I like to be open and direct. When I start to draw, the action will take me to an idea. Maybe a jagged line will take me to a death camp in Germany, which then will take me to barbed wire, to a body part, to blood. It becomes an improvisation with many other images. Sometimes I feel like there’s a filing cabinet of images in my head and the act of marking or staining will retrieve the image. I synthesize by



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Love Dreams Curiosity Glove (front and back), 2007, gouache, ink, and natural materials on glove, 8 by 4 inches

layering the medium, images, words, etc. Within the made image, you begin to see other things.

MH: Your piece *Why Are the Nests Hanging by a Thread?* is part of larger series of work in which you wrote and painted on deconstructed letter envelopes, combining both poetry and painting. How did these two forms come together?

JS: I collect paper ephemera, like old envelopes that still have the letters inside. In this series of over sixty envelopes, I began to make up stories about the letter writers and incorporated drawings and lines from my poems. The images and text act as imaginary letters I wrote to people.

MH: Drawn lines emerge from the text of your poems; other times the mark travels from words. Can you speak more about how you create this visual and poetic text-based work?

JS: Another profession I considered was being an archaeologist—I’m fascinated by Mayan symbols and Egyptian hieroglyphs. These pre-emoji people had a whole language drawn out, like the graffiti from the train cars of my youth. If I make a line and see a form coming from that, I’ll link it with a letter to intersect the form. I think back to making cursive letters as a child. I still feel as if I am interlocking the letters, but now with imagery, to make them into something that is no longer recognizable yet new to offer. ▣

More information about Julia Salinger’s work can be found at bakedmashedfried.com.

MEGAN HINTON is an artist, educator, and curator who lives in Wellfleet, Massachusetts.



Why Are the Nests Hanging by a Thread?, 2014, ink, marker, and graphite on found envelope, 10 by 12 inches

The Red Moon

Text by Joanne Barkan • Art by Vicky Tomayko



The Red Moon, 2009, monoprint with lithography, silk screen, drypoint, and airbrush, 44 by 30 inches

Red sky in the morning,
sailors take warning.

Red moon in the evening,
stars begin wheeling,

spiders start scheming,
heartbreaks stop healing,

and some of us suffer that
old sinking feeling

that cosmic confusion
trumps rational meaning.

JOANNE BARKAN writes occasionally about art that she loves. Otherwise, she is a political essayist, an editorial board member of *Dissent* magazine, and the author of many books—in verse and prose—for young readers. She lives in Manhattan and Truro.

VICKY TOMAYKO is an artist, a teacher, and a former Fellow of the Fine Arts Work Center. She uses silk screen, lithography, and monotype to create one-of-a-kind works on paper. Her work—at once narrative, humorous, and edgy—can be seen at the Schoolhouse Gallery in Provincetown.



An Interview with Paul Lisicky

By Elizabeth McCracken

AT LAST, THIS CONSOLATION OF MIDDLE AGE: I HAVE NOW KNOWN PAUL LISICKY for more than half my life, longer than I didn't know him. Truthfully, it's always felt that way. We met in 1988, in Iowa City—I remember singing his name to the tune of the Hallelujah Chorus: Paaaul! Lisicky! Paul Lisicky! Paul Lisicky!—but we came to really know each other in Provincetown, in the early '90s, when we were both second-year Fellows at the Fine Arts Work Center.

A confession: I've found writing about Paul and his work much harder than I'd imagined. How to sum him up, either the human being or the work? Paul Lisicky: whenever I drop his name to someone who's met him, that person says, "Oh, I love Paul Lisicky," and I always answer, "Paul Lisicky is the most lovable person on earth." The work, too, defies summary. I merely press it into the hands of those who haven't read it, and kvell with those who have.

Some writers *are* their work—you admire the slantwise sense of humor, a confidential tone, a penetrating insight. Somehow, though, what I love about Paul is different from what I love about his work. There's some overlap: his admiration of strangeness, his ability to put into words what I might otherwise think of as ineffable. The love of animals, which borders on the religious. But Paul the person is open and kind, game and comforting, and, at the right time—it is the deepest part of our friendship—hilariously crass, a brilliant deployer of off-color remarks. His work, though, is full of a stubborn brilliance, or a brilliant stubbornness. He refuses to choose or reduce in his work: he does everything. His work is brilliant on the subject of beauty, and it's sometimes very, very funny, but it's ruthless when it needs to be. It forgives no more than it should. It whispers in the reader's ear: the world is strange and dangerous. In the world of his books there is always this question: you are under threat, which in itself can be a kind of gift—what are you going to do about it?

There is nobody I would rather talk about writing with.

ELIZABETH MCCRACKEN: What do you remember about your first trip to Provincetown?

PAUL LISICKY: I was pretty young, early twenties. My mother and I were in Boston to pick up my brother, who had just finished his first year at the New England Conservatory. The three of us took a side trip to Provincetown, just two days, and I loved it so much it probably made me a little nuts. Biking through the dunes, watching the tide go in and out. Looking at men, of course, but trying to do that without my mom noticing. I remember ordering a Dos Equis beer at the old Moors Restaurant and mispronouncing it, even though I already knew how to say it. (I called it Dos Ek-wiss. *Why?*) The waiter winced, and I felt the sting like a slap: he had a blond, brushy mustache. Over the course of this trip, my brother had a toothache, which had developed into a serious dental emergency. There was a dentist in Wellfleet. I remember saying in a very proper voice, "I'd be happy to stay behind in Provincetown, while you and Michael go to Wellfleet." My mother already knew me too well and possibly pictured me doing God-knows-what in a little room above the A-House. "Oh no you don't," she said, and so I spent several hours in a dark waiting room in Wellfleet, pretending to read *Popular Mechanics*.

EM: The Moors! I think our friendship was deepened when we discovered our mutual, deep, instinctive love of the Moors. Do you think you can explain why those old unchanged restaurants are so pleasing? To me it feels akin to memoir: walking into a place from the past that instantly conjures up a lot of feeling.

PL: I'm sure our attraction to the Moors had something to do with our mutual sense of it as being endangered. It conjured up a real sense of time and place, when going out to eat was an adventure. I remember it being dark, cabiny: lots of traps and ropes and wood and portholes. Low ceilings. Maybe it even smelled of mildew. I'm sure it must have been a little nasty, but it filled us with joy, right? Who cared about the food? It had layers and levels. Even in anxious times, people probably want to be disoriented, even if lightly—which is to say, they want to feel alive. They want to be in their bodies, not just hovering. Provincetown, at large, always does a pretty good job of doing that for us, even in its current much tidier, wealthier incarnation. I think a good memoir does that too.

EM: You have lived and written in Provincetown over many years in many different ways: as a Fellow; as a resident in funny apartments, and

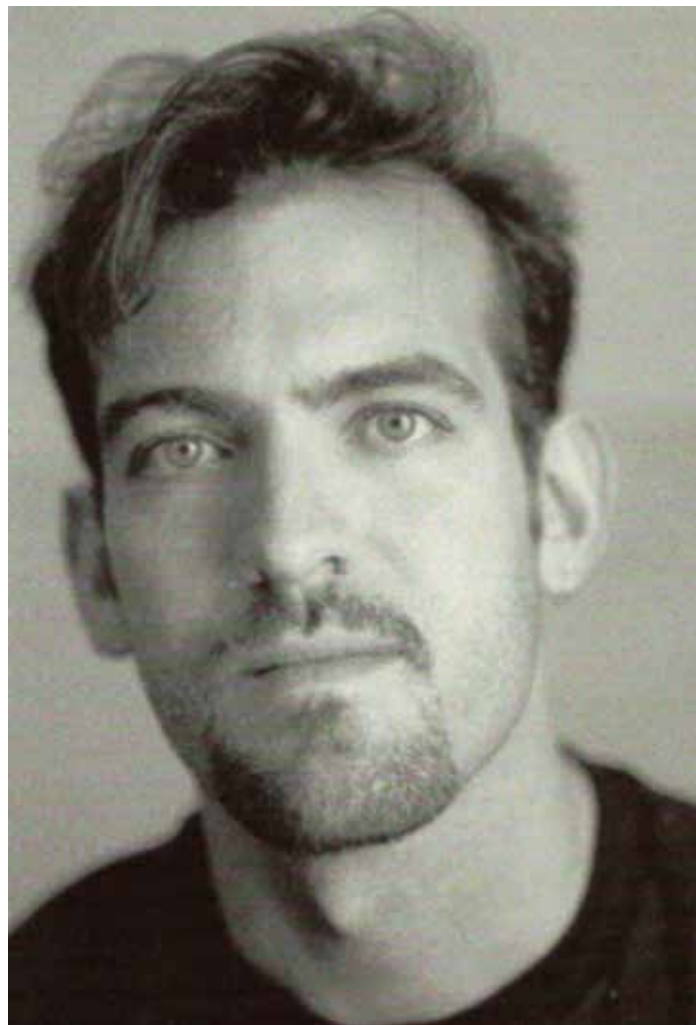
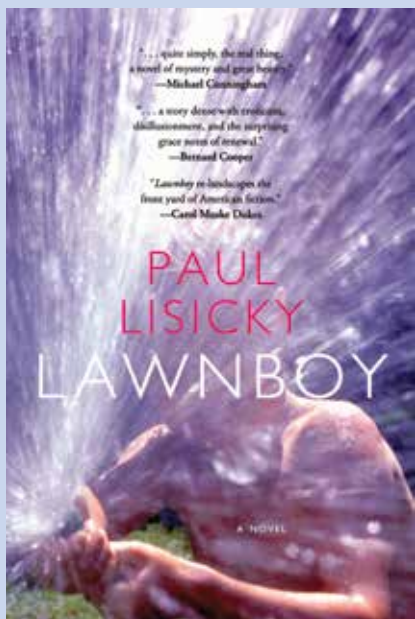


PHOTO BY C. A. ROBINSON

Paul at the Fine Arts Work Center, 1992

then a house; as a returning resident; and as a resident for the whole stretch of the summer. You and I recently spent a week at the Work Center, writing in our apartments, having a late lunch, and then going back to write. How has your process changed in your different stays in Provincetown? What does it bring to your writing now?



I lay there, trying to relax as his hands, strong and pressured, kneaded the muscles of my shoulders. I hadn't realized how tense I'd been. It felt terrific actually, although it hurt like a blowtorch, like he was writing his name onto my skin. Little utterances emanated from my mouth. After a while I moved into a space beyond thought. It only took minutes. I found myself floating, backstroking through a pool the size of space. Stars fizzled out, and I looked over my shoulder and saw a little earth turning in the darkness, silent. Even from this place I could see it diminishing. Even from this safe place I saw great forests burning down, towers crumbling, vast countries of people scrambling for food. I saw that there wasn't very much time.

— from *Lawnboy* (1998)

PL: Oh gosh, I love this question. I've had so many different lives in this town, and you know that better than anyone. It's funny: I wrote big portions of *Lawnboy* during my time as a Fellow and during my years in town afterward, but the real structure of that book came to me in Iowa City, when Mark and I spent a semester in Gerald Stern's house. I had a hard time focusing in Provincetown back in the '90s. There was so much life in the air that I didn't want to miss any of it. I wanted to be out on the street, I wanted to go to Kook, I wanted to go to the Love Shack, I wanted to hang out at Spiritus till two in the morning, etc., etc. I often felt agitated at my desk, with a feeling that I should shackle my left leg to my chair. That feeling subsided somewhat once I moved into 19 Pearl Street [where Lisicky lived with his now ex-husband, Mark Doty]. But honestly? It felt like the real writing happened elsewhere, in Houston, in Iowa City, on our visiting semesters. I'm not saying that Provincetown wasn't wonderful for my writing. In fact, I often think of my writing as written out of a Provincetown sensibility (does that sound pretentious?), but I needed to take it elsewhere in order to give it some room to breathe and grow.

I've been coming back to Provincetown pretty regularly since 2010, after about three years AWOL. I stay at Polly [Burnell]'s apartment or at FAWC, and the irony is I come back here to write now. I don't know if that's because the atmosphere in town's changed, or I've changed, but I don't have that "missing out" feeling anymore when I sit down to work. Provincetown doesn't feel as hormonal or as overloaded as it once did, but maybe that's because I've spent so many years in big cities. It was so wonderful writing this past September, knowing you were nearby, and passing that energy back and forth. It felt like we were taking care of each other, each other's work. And we were in sync with the town, with each other.

EM: Your forthcoming book, *Later*, is about Provincetown (among other things, as your work is always about many things). And I think of you as a writer obsessed with place. What made you write about Provincetown now?

PL: I'd wanted to write about Provincetown for twenty years, specifically about those first years when the two of us were here, when the town was a haven for people with HIV and AIDS. That simultaneous sense of utopia and dystopia—and the village born out of that contradiction. A safe place in which the (mostly) young are decimated by illness. So much feeling binding people together: solidarity and tenderness and gallows humor and boredom and helping one another out—almost



A caricature of Paul drawn on a cocktail napkin by Alison Bechdel, Washington, DC, 2012

automatically. The possibility of emergency at any time. How does that affect who and how you love? How do you get through the day if the future isn't guaranteed?

I can't say what initially possessed me to write about it now. Maybe it had something to do with the advent of PrEP, and the culture's unspoken desire to put the Epidemic in the long, long ago past. To make it unreal. To mythologize. I was at Yaddo in 2015, my father had just died, and rather than write about him, I started writing about Provincetown. I worked like a mad person for weeks, eight hours a day, but felt some anxiety about the project's relevance for a reader right now. I put it aside for some months. Fast-forward to the election of 2016, and suddenly the atmosphere of precariousness felt eerily real again. I went back to the book and opened it up some more. I've always been



FAWC group photo taken in the Province Lands, 1992: (from left) David Fludd, Robert Siegel, Matt Harle, Lee Boroson, Paul, Andrew Norton, Mindy Mills, Jane Fine, Joshua Clover, Janice Redman, Linda Matalon, Matt Klam, Joy Nolan, Itty Neuhaus, Lucy Grealy, and Janet MacFadyen

PHOTO BY JOEL MEYEROWITZ



PHOTO BY GREY DEY



PHOTO BY IRENE LIPTON

interested in how people get through days of great difficulty. Unexpectedly, it's turned out to be a book about hope, and constructing the kind of future we might want. But it's also about ghosts and animals and how the unseen shapes us too.

EM: I always think of you as a writer of both great specificity and very large ideas: everything you've just said, climate change, longing, home, etc. When I knew I would write about you, one of the things I thought about was how, in your work, you don't choose. You don't choose genre over genre; you don't choose idea over idea. You are both hilarious and devastating. I gave *The Narrow Door* to a student who's working on a memoir, and she said, What's it about? And I found I almost didn't want to answer, because I knew she would love it and I didn't want to reduce it. How do you know when divergent threads go together?

PL: Well, to me the dream is to make music out of language. And by music, I mean not a single melodic line, but harmony. Polyphony even. Multiple points in time, multiple notes, ringing together like chords. Sense escaping into pure sound. It's a doomed effort obviously when you're working with words alone, but I still want to approximate. Graphic novels are probably better suited to simultaneity because you can do so much with drawing. I'm thinking of a book like Richard McGuire's *Here*, which wants to capture the life of a single room over the span of countless years. Within a single panel, you might have four or more points in time talking to each other. The effect of that is thrilling.

My own more recent work also has its roots in a kind of multitiered poetry. Honestly, it starts on the simplest possible level—I write a section until I've said all I can say at the moment. I try to tune myself in to the primary image in that section, and that invariably signals the next image, and so on. So the hope is that all these sequences are permeating one another, inviting the reader to make and feel connections. I guess I never really know whether it's working or not when I'm doing it. Sometimes I write into that space where I'm wondering, man, this could possibly be *awful*. A total cringe-fest. But it's exciting to give yourself permission to be bad. That might just be where life begins. Once patterns start arising, I trust the work might have its own internal energy. This might just sound hopelessly abstract, too personal to parse. It doesn't make my work sound accessible, when that's one of my deepest desires for it. And I never use this kind of language to myself when I'm writing. The longer I write, the more I want to get back to someplace purely intuitive, which is to say a place that's a hell of a lot more complex than where I am when I'm *trying*.

EM: I'm so excited to hear you talk about music! I have never forgotten you telling me that sometimes you'll write a sentence of nonsense syllables, because you know what you want a sentence to sound like, but you're not yet sure of the words. I find that fascinatingly alien to the way I think about prose. Does all of the musicality come at the same time to you, the harmony of the threads, the melody of the sentences? And is it all in your head—do you read aloud when you work, or do you have perfect pitch internally?

PL: I remember saying that with the assumption you did it too! But that was once upon a time, and I'm afraid I've moved on from nonsense syllables, though I do read everything aloud as I write it. Over and over and over again, through many drafts. And the contour of a sentence means a lot to me, even if it's a relatively conversational sentence. Its breaths and stops. It builds and breaks. Sometime around *The Burning House*, my sentences started to get more austere, and I think a lot of that has to do with my interest in sound. Sentence as musical phrase. Plain speech as its own kind of music.

To be perfectly honest, a lot of that comes from my long admiration for *your* work and the exquisite phrasing of your first-person narrators.

(from top) Mark Doty and Paul, Provincetown, 2001; Dara Wier, Matthea Harvey, Paul, and Joy Williams, Amherst, Massachusetts, 2015; Suzanne Gardinier, Victoria Redel, Donna Masini, Rachel Eliza Griffiths, and Paul, New York City, 2017; Paul, Polly Burnell, and Jennie Livingston, 2016

Paul

By Matthew Klam

PAUL AND I WERE FELLOWS IN FICTION AT THE FINE Arts Work Center in the winter of 1992–93 and were scheduled to read together on a dark and chilly Saturday night. Well before the reading, we met to create a promotional poster to be distributed around town, tacked to the bulletin board at the supermarket and stapled to telephone poles. After some deliberation we decided to include photographs of ourselves, and we discovered that we both had pictures of us with our mothers. About my photo all I can say is that it was taken at her birthday party and that I had chocolate icing all over my face. In the photo I'm staring at the camera, and my mother is looking at me with amusement. I guess this photo indicates that I'm a slob, a hedonist, and self-absorbed.

In Paul's photo, he is about the same age, maybe four years old, probably about three feet tall, very blond, with fine features. We can see that he's probably in love with his mother, and who wouldn't be? Paul's mother is a stylish mom of the sixties. She's quite capably waving at the camera, with the photographer positioned behind her, as she pilots a wooden speedboat across some body of water. Paul sits beside her, staring up at her white-framed cat's-eye sunglasses. She wears a

white blouse, the sleeves rolled up, a scarf on her head, and red lipstick. And on her lithe-looking tanned arm, the one that's waving, she wears a wedding ring, an engagement ring, and a small gold watch. Paul is observing her thoughtfully, with fascination and something else, a removed and slightly critical interest in her on what might be a more phenomenological level. In this way, Paul is observing all of us. His interest in her at this moment, his interest in others, in seeing into others, is a lovely indication of things to come, a foreshadowing of his calling, his need to express this love for us. 📷



Paul and his mother, Anne, Great Egg Harbor Bay, New Jersey

PHOTO BY ANTON LISICKY

I love how those characters have a life on the page, but a spoken-aloud life too: their words make shapes in the air. I just taught "Some Terpsichore" to my MFA students and as usual could not resist reading a long part of it aloud. And my students were so into it, so quiet with awe afterward, I almost looked out at them, and said, "Elizabeth? She's mine." But instead I behaved myself.

EM: Earlier you said something about your work being written out of a Provincetown sensibility. What does a Provincetown sensibility mean to you?

PL: When I first came to FAWC, I knew right away that the standards by which we valued work in grad school (say, publication by Knopf or Farrar, Straus and Giroux) didn't count so much here. So many of my first friends in town—Polly Burnell and Richard Baker, James Esber and Jane Fine—were visual artists, and they were much more interested in the work itself rather than in the reception of the work. In truth, the greatest crime was to be "boring" and a lot of the well-received work at the time was thought to be repetitive, cheap. Coming into contact with

that kind of integrity changed me into my blood; it gave me a terrific sense of freedom and adventure. I know I'd have been a much different kind of writer, probably a lesser writer, if I hadn't put in my time here.

As to a Provincetown sensibility? For me, it still means a kind of work that respects idiosyncrasy. It cares very little about the marketplace and it isn't holding out a wet finger to the wind, even though it knows that art is always in flux. It isn't afraid of color and vividness (what some would call beauty) because it knows those gestures are defying illness, hatred, and hurt. It's wary of a faux-edginess, but that doesn't mean it isn't dark. It believes in play. It definitely cultivates humor, even wacky humor. It's matter-of-fact about sex, as it believes that sex is central to who and what we are. Because its primary value is distinctiveness, it doesn't care about competition, or trying to slay its rivals. Is love at its core? I'm still trying to get my head around that. 📷

ELIZABETH MCCracken is the author of two books of short stories, two novels, and one memoir. A new novel, Bowlaway, will be published by Ecco Press in 2019. She currently teaches at the University of Texas at Austin.

Perhaps it has something to do with my father (his work ethic, his distrust of anything lazy or lax), but to my mind certain kinds of collaboration come too close to cheating. Performing should scare the shit out of you, turn you inside out, hang you upside down from your toes, take you within a hair's breath of your death. "The lights go down / and it's just you up there / getting them to feel like that," sings Joni, and that's exactly what I want. I tremble inside a splash of light, trying to stay on pitch. There's a burnt, electrical taste in my back fillings, and somewhere, deep in the darkness, a match flares; someone with a starved heart is calling out my name.

Then one voice, two, three—Kevin, Grace, Bernardine. What's going on? The three of them are harmonizing, working their way through the last verse, mulching, fertilizing the melody until it pops, bursts into a layered garden: irises, tulips staining each other with color, light. A breeze blows. The air scents. We're moving, alive, a wholeness. Throats are dusted with pollen. Tiny hairs tremble on the backs of our necks. And what would a single flower mean?

— from *Famous Builder* (2002)

The rising seas, the sinking lawn: none of that bothered me tonight. Laura's health and mind, shifting like water. Mister Greasy, Son of Unabomber. Far away. Yay. I walked from the bay. I could not see. But I might have been given a fresh brain, inspired and outwardly turned, and as soon as I spoke those words to the deep, I swear creatures started coming toward me. Squirrels, raccoons, deer, herons, catbirds, footfalls on fallen leaves. I was like someone out of a freaking folktale, who knew not death or the churned-up stomach but moved through the night with the lightest tread, changing it with the benevolence of his passing. Oh, I'm exaggerating for effect now, I'll admit it. Real contentment has none of that extremity or loopiness. No sign of endings, or the long black coat creeping out from behind a bush. What was I telling you? It was something like this: the world was made exactly for us and we'd never have to leave it.

— from *The Burning House* (2011)

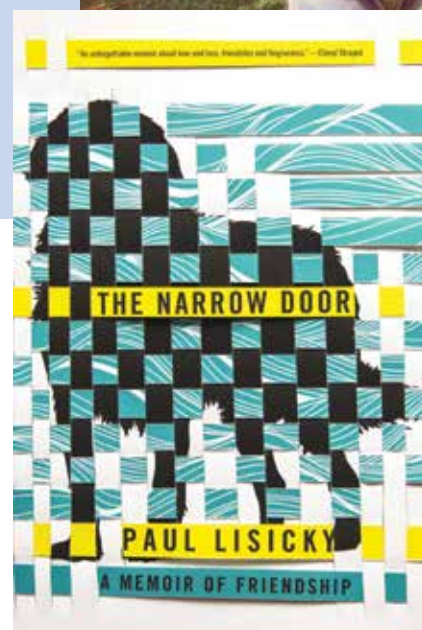
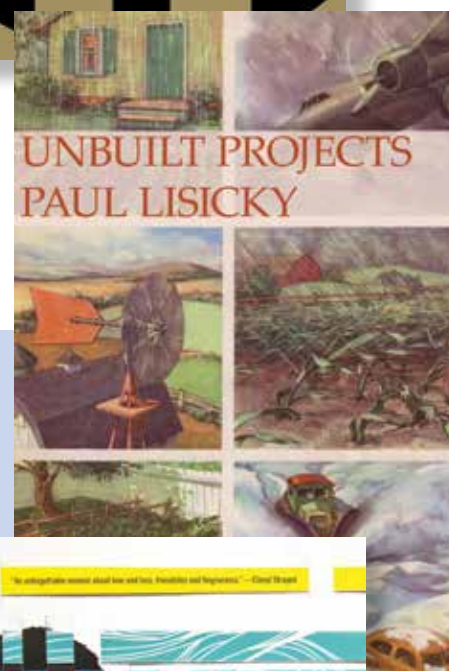
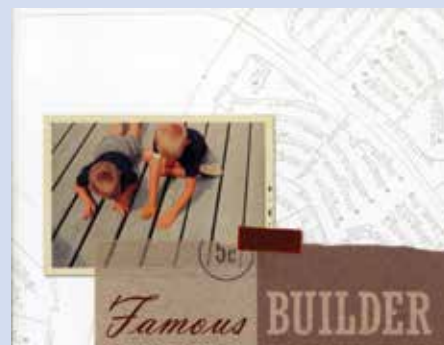
Yesterday I opened the door of the big blue cabinet. Varnishy, rich: the indescribable smell of our black and white cat, Portia, who'd hid in there in the last weeks of her life, on a shelf behind CDs. Could it still smell of her after all these years? Nine years. She'd died in there, at some point when we were out for an afternoon.

I went for a bike ride. To my right, a square of grass vibrated on someone's lawn: raw green, bleached out, almost too much to look at. A bunny froze on the edge of that square, waiting. I had a notion that my mother was relieved to get back the part of herself that could worry about me again. Then the bunny ran.

— from *Unbuilt Projects* (2012)

How tempting it is to do the alchemical now. To turn darkness into light, bread into flesh, tin into gold, wine into blood. It's what narrative wants of us, at least this part of the narrative. It wants to comfort, not that we should necessarily link comfort to weakness. Couldn't there be some rigor to comfort? I'd like to think story could give it that, to give the hurting in us strength and power. So we will not leave the page without reserving a pasture for darkness, inscrutability. If we don't acknowledge that pasture, if we don't respect the secret creatures that might be grazing there, those creatures may turn on us. They might loom and howl and bear down on us because they need to eat, as all creatures need to eat.

— from *The Narrow Door* (2016)



Paul

By Claire Vaye Watkins

PAUL LISICKY WAS A GIFT TO ME FROM MY HUSBAND, a lapsed Catholic whose new god is the sentence. Though my husband and I are both writers, reading aloud to each other has never been our custom. Yet Derek read me many sentences from Lisicky's *The Narrow Door: A Memoir of Friendship*. As I've said, this behavior was anomalous. I think the only other writers my husband has ever felt moved to read aloud have been thirteenth-century mystics. But if you know Paul Lisicky's work, you know this makes perfect sense. As I soon discovered, Lisicky is a visionary, at home among the seers.

If you don't yet know the Lisicky liturgy—*Famous Builder*, *The Burning House*, *Unbuilt Projects*, and his daring first, *Lawn-boy*—I envy you. Each book will break and rebuild you. *The Narrow Door* is immensely moving, and by “immensely moving” I mean to say inducing in this reviewer a crying jag so all-consuming and cleansing it might have been prayer. But *The Narrow Door* is also a stylistic tour de force. Lisicky threads together storytelling modes and materials a lesser writer would inevitably find irreconcilable, would hack into coleslaw and call it “braided.” I'm talking about myself here, as I've tried and failed to imitate Lisicky's prose many times.

How does he do it? I can't say for sure. An uncanny use of the present tense makes his narration both cool and urgent, Paul's narrator doppelgänger simultaneously ruminative with retrospection and afloat on the present moment. This temporal double-consciousness combines with a kind of fractal structure in a technique Paul describes as “queer time.” Indeed, it's as if he builds an intricate sculpture out of high Modernist technique and then somehow wires in a real, beating heart.

The Narrow Door is an arrestingly unique way of telling one of our oldest stories:

people go. This is an exceedingly rare sort of book, one that is genuinely avant-garde and, at the same time, as natural as gossip. It is a book about endings, the long good-byes we always knew were coming and yet could not imagine. Lisicky weaves love and grief in a completely new way—the warp is the human, the weft is everything beyond human control: storms, volcanoes, cancer. It is about the shimmering beauty we hope awaits on the other side. Also, Joni Mitchell.

Making it new is something hardly ever done, and in *The Narrow Door* Lisicky does it effortlessly, before our very eyes. Because I am a lucky duck, I have heard Paul read and speak several times, and then each time I've been changed by the experience. Paul is brilliant, warm, and supremely lucid about the art and craft of writing. Rumor has it he's even working on a book about Provincetown. So, read Paul Lisicky and receive visitation from your local oracle. ▣



Justin Torres, Claire Vaye Watkins, and Paul, Writing By Writers Conference, Tomales Bay, California, 2016

PHOTO BY PAM HOUSTON

Paul

By Lisa Olstein

ONCE I SAT IN A DARKENED AUDITORIUM AS PAUL Lisicky stepped up to the microphone, opened his mouth, and a symphony came out. Perhaps not a symphony—I'm not sure that's precisely right, and in referring to someone with as much musical expertise as Paul, one should be precise—but without a doubt, he began to read from a piece of new work and a complex orchestration enveloped me. What I mean to say is that over the ensuing timeless-feeling duration (thirty minutes, forty?) I experienced the kind of transport—physical, emotional, intellectual—usually conjured by complex pieces of music exquisitely composed and passionately performed by a stage full of expert players. The room, its semi-comfortable seats, its people who I knew and didn't know, loved or didn't even like or might never even realize existed, disappeared. My life became the life of the work Paul shared, my consciousness was carried beyond myself and into myself; both were parts unknown now newly realized. It was about love and grief. A mother, a son, a childhood, the ocean, I think, sun and waves. It was about death, recent or maybe impending—isn't it always?

Think of an orchestra filling a resonant hall with its rise and fall, its developments and discoveries, its departures and returns; think of the range of tonalities brought to bear, vibrating in the air: the ones you hear crystal clear at the very top of your ear, the ones you absorb as a rumble in your lungs, those in-between, and beyond, too, the ones of which you can't even be consciously aware. These are what played across and through me, that is, through Paul, that is, through the work. Virtuoso? Yes, undeniably, and seemingly without fail. But in Paul's writing, this gift, no matter how pleasurable, is not the point. The point is the transport that ushers us in and out of time, that like live wires arcs glowing connections between past and present, thought and feeling, self and other, self and self. ▣

Readings at (from top) Powerhouse Arena in Brooklyn in the fall of 2017; Brattleboro Literary Festival, Brattleboro, Vermont, 2016; Fine Arts Work Center, 2016; Tin House Summer Writer's Workshop, Portland, Oregon, 2017

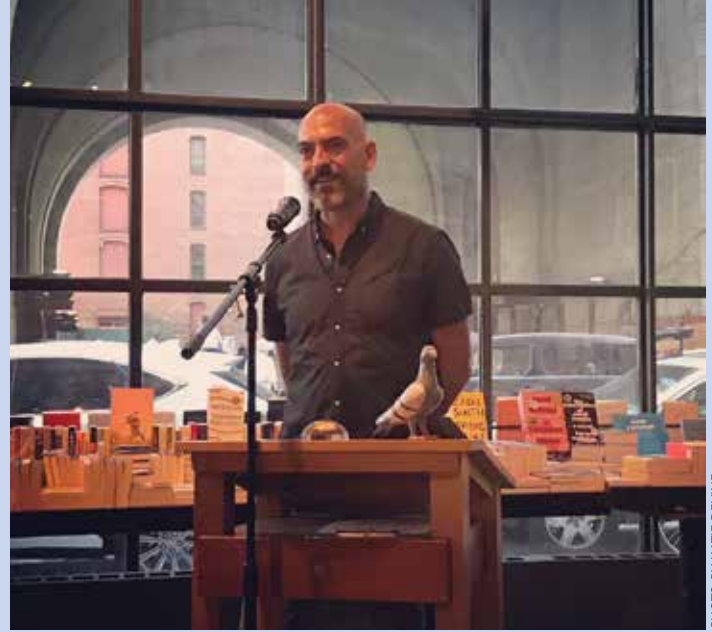


PHOTO BY KATIE DEVINE



PHOTO BY MICHAEL MAREN



PHOTO BY PETER HOCKING

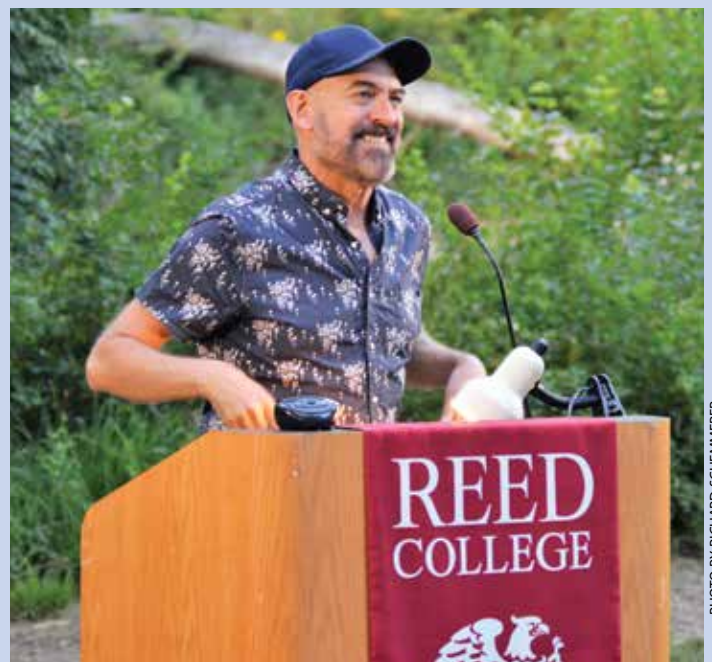


PHOTO BY RICHARD SCHEMMERER

Lisicky

By Carl Phillips

EVEN THOUGH HE DOESN'T LIVE THERE, or mostly doesn't, I'm never surprised when I see Paul approaching from around any given corner of Provincetown. I once encountered him and immediately thought of that phrase from "Lycidas," in which Milton describes a friend as the "Genius"—as in the presiding spirit—"of the shore." The spirit Paul brings with him has always been one of openness, kindness, compassion: joy, ultimately, which he pretty much radiates, seemingly all the time.

It took me some years to realize that four of Paul's five books include something of architecture in their titles: *Famous Builder*, *The Burning House*, *Unbuilt Projects*, and *The Narrow Door*. It's been noted that part of Paul's subject matter concerns the building of a self and, especially in his most recent book, the building (and losing) of friendships as part of that self. What that latter book also wrestles with—and I think this is more at the heart of what Paul is examining—is that, as much as we might want to think about things like selves and friendships as architectural, quantifiable, guaranteeable, those things finally aren't architectural at all; our impulse to make the abstract concrete, at best, discloses the futility of that impulse and, at worst, consigns us to eventual disappointment and loss.

So why do it at all?

Just last summer, Paul was talking to me about his daily habit of finding and tweeting news stories mostly related to animals—an alligator shows up in someone's pool, or a bear cub is seen wandering the halls of a motel, or the key deer population is slowly coming back. They're almost always funny or in some way encouraging stories. "I don't know if anyone else cares or really reads them, but I love sending them out there," Paul told me, with his characteristic smile. I went away thinking, maybe that's also how Paul thinks about joy,



Paul and Carl Phillips, Pepe's Wharf Restaurant, Provincetown, 2016

PHOTO BY KIMIKO HAHN

as something to throw into the world; maybe someone else catches it, and is briefly changed.

To insist on thinking of abstract things as concrete speaks to a desire to make a thing stay, to make it be more permanent, in the face of our own impermanence, and of the impermanence of friendships—friends die, friends evolve away from us sometimes, even as we ourselves evolve away from them. One way to see this kind of thinking is as a refusal to succumb to certain grim realities. Another way: as a form of hope, which implies faith, a belief somewhere that our efforts aren't useless. To me, it's a radical way of thinking, because of its resistance to truth or to what can sometimes feel inevitable and therefore true. What Paul seems to do is wield radical joy—not because he doesn't know about sorrow, but because he refuses to be conquered by it. And, in doing so, he invites us into the possibility of joy for ourselves, in the immediate communion with friends like Paul himself, and also later, alone, the joy still resonating, a bit like memory, but finally just like joy. Paul's radical joy, on the page and in the man, is a gift. I've long been instructed by it. I continue to be grateful for it. ✕

Paul Lisicky

from LATER

(forthcoming from Graywolf Press in 2020)

This is an early section from my next memoir, which is set in Provincetown from 1991 to 1994. I'd just arrived as a writing Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center, and the AIDS epidemic was at its height in town. At that time Provincetown was a village of the young: who even lived past forty? Brevity was on every mind.

Circus

Is Provincetown farther from anywhere else on earth? Possibly it would be different if the last hour of your journey weren't built of two-lane roads, but probably not. Longing does that to a person. You're hungry, hopeful, too agitated to eat. Porosity does strange things to your perception. You feel like you've left your country. The Pilgrim Monument, straight out of Italy; the curve of the harbor, shining; the spray of boxy cottages along the bayfront. All the way up Route 6 you've been in New England, charming and astringent. And then you're tumbled into a fishing village in what could be France, Portugal, Venezuela, Chile.

I make the left turn onto Snail Road. I pull into the parking lot between two buildings, one long and relaxed, the other stubby. A barn with a blue circular plaque on the shingles. There isn't anyone around except for a young woman with hunched shoulders carrying pots and pans from her car to a doorway. I hang out in the car for a minute, head down, moistening my dry mouth. Why is my pulse racing? Maybe she will go away.

She does go away. I walk into the office. Friendly and tight handshakes—Michael? Robert? I tell myself I cannot forget their names and then I instantly forget their names. A key and a manila envelope are passed into my hand. I'm even more worn out than I've let myself know.

I want them to think they've made the right choice by bringing me here, but how? Maybe if I'm sweet enough, funny enough, they won't notice that I'm practically a fraud, that it takes me hours to put the simplest paragraph together, that I distract myself from my work as soon as the writing goes well, and I'm too flustered to sit down at my desk for more than twenty minutes at a time.

The hatchback opens. Out comes the suitcase and then a duffel bag. I trudge up the stairs, their thin carpeted treads. Running up and down, up and down. Somehow I manage to empty the hatchback in five minutes flat. I sit cross-legged on the floor of my long narrow space, the second floor of a Cape Cod house. One window to the north, one window to the south. Dormer in the living room. Strip of kitchen fixtures to one side. Narrow bedroom, single twin bed up against the wall. Only enough room to fully stand up within three feet of either side of the ceiling peak. A boxcar. A monk's space.

I lie on the bare mattress, fully dressed, look up at the ceiling. I feel something burning in me. Or is it just death grabbing at me, the voice of my mother pulling me down, down? Why has my father run away? I want something that isn't directly in front of me, which translates itself to desire. Desire is a condition I can take care of.

Though the night is quiet (crickets, some sitcom laughter from a wide-open window), I cannot be quiet with it. There is a town out there, there is the circus. And I have been dead too long.

Catwalk

Nights come early now. It is fall, and life is about to change for all living forms: animals, humans, plants, the water. Town seems less like a resort, at least the Ocean City I knew from my childhood, and more like a tiny metropolis. The harbor is hidden, a secret behind the walls

of stores on the water side of the street, and when I try to find it, it is sometimes difficult: the openings are narrow and few and are often smelly, weedy, industrial. Town was clearly designed before anyone had even thought of tourists anyway—and why would anyone visit a windy place where the streets fill with sand and storms spin up out of nowhere, boat ropes squeaking at the pier? Those who fished had probably seen enough of the water, and no one complained about walling off the view. What is a view anyway, but a look onto something you don't have?

Unlike the crowds in the great anonymous city, people in Provincetown don't disappear. People are larger here. Gestures, the cuts of jeans, shirt patterns. They appear to be chosen experimentally, expect to be remembered, recorded. The main street positioned like a catwalk, even when it's empty, even when people aren't looking up from benches or looking down from shop windows to see what all that noise is about.

I already sense it in my hands and feet: fall off your bicycle, have a public falling out with a friend, and it's passed around, talked about for years, until it concentrates into legend.

Wonky

How far has your life been from what matters, your body, your breathing, your posture, your silliness, your joy? You find yourself walking differently, maybe standing straighter. People look at you in a way they might not look at you in the town where you're from.

But your joy is cut through with anxiety because how will life as you knew it be possible away from this wonky spit of land, so far from the repression and punishments of adult life?

You've been given the first taste of an afterlife and you can't help but taste some metal in your mouth.

Let's Keep It a Mystery

From now on we'll call it Town, to take back all the associations you might already have of it, whether they be commercial, poetic, queer, a visual artist's capitol of light. Anything too sociological. Anything known. Let's keep it a mystery, even though we all want to own it, in our own ways, like nothing we've ever owned before. We want to tell people we know the best beach, the best dog-walking trail, the best spot to get away from others. Town as much an *idea* of community as a place attached to the Earth. Town embedding a notion of how to live with one another, even if it's falling short of its ideals, yes, failing on a daily level, and still going on.

Which gives us the feeling that Town moves on two tracks at once. The time of narrative—in which people want things and lose things—and lyric time, which has nothing to do with the clock. It floats, and it isn't quite attached to Town but it's part of the structure of Town—what draws people here whether they realize it or not. Clock time moves forward but lyric time moves off to the side and stalls there: lateral instead of linear. It is time as enacted in a painting or a poem or a song. It exists outside of human history, and has little to do with people. It was around before people and it will exist long after the people are gone.

More San Francisco than San Francisco

I keep walking until there's no more street left to walk, until the lights go off in the houses, and then even the houses empty out, and it's just the bay bisected by a thin breakwater, which must look like the arm of a sundial from above, during daylight.

It certainly isn't my first walk in town but it's an early walk. I don't yet know that sex is never really just sex here. In a small town where everyone is wary of bumping into *that* tryst in the A&P, I probably still have the hungry look of a tourist who's never going to be heard from again. Thus I am "talent," a designation that lasts all of a few days, and I'll only figure that out years later, when the benefits are too late to cash in.

He stands in front of the head shop, one of the beating hearts of town, which is bright with pink-and-green Day Glo, obscene bumper stickers in the front window, and possibly monster dildos hanging from hooks in the ceiling. He is tall, blond. I usually don't take to blonds, but he has a rangy goofy energy in the manner of a dog, not a real dog, but a cartoon dog like Scooby-Doo. He does not present as a gay guy, or even comport himself for other gay guys: no military haircut or goatee or bandana. His hair sticks up then falls down, as if he might comb it every three days, or whenever it occurs to him. His eyes are blue, unexpectedly kind. He is still a boy, though he might be twenty-eight. He has the look of someone who doesn't have a family, doesn't have a best friend, or any close friends really, just a lot of noisy people swirling around him feeding him any powders and pills he wants.

"Do you want to get high and have sex?" he asks.

And because I haven't touched anyone since God-knows-when, and because I'm possibly flattered to be singled out by anyone, I say yes to the cracked glee of this, the easiest yes I'll probably ever say about sex in my life.

We're on the bed of a second-floor bedroom of a violet Victorian with dragons and gryphons in the yard—more San Francisco than even San Francisco. It is very dark, and there isn't very much inside. No mementos or pictures of old boyfriends or siblings on the tall dresser. No shades or even a sheet over the windows. It is the room of someone who hasn't ever moved into his life, and probably never will. Why bother at this late hour?

He doesn't ask who I am or where I'm from, which is a relief. Not that I want to be a stranger. It's just that language would probably kill what we are about to do and I'm not sure I would ever want to do it with him again. I haven't banked up any emotion into this project, which is unusual, as I am not yet a professional in this department, and I won't be a professional for a good long time.

I am still watching him, watching myself from some safe distance, when he pulls out a condom. Even when you are three times higher than a kite you pull out a condom. He rolls it onto me, even if, in his case, he just appears to be taking me into his mouth. We are close to AIDS, so close it's almost inside before it's even inside. The *idea* of it: the air we breathe is drenched in it, and that's why it doesn't even occur to us to be bothered by the scent and feel of latex. In deadly times, who wouldn't be grateful for a wet suit?

Nights of Cabiria

On some nights the Moon in Town is the Moon from *The Tempest*, but with more sex and menace in it; it sweeps down on the rooftops and harbor. It tells you there is no other place to be. It tells you you were foolish to expect anything less of the world than this—why are you always putting up with less? The harbor is a cup that was made for this Moon. It holds and shimmers it, backlighting the shapes of the boats and the rocks of the breakwater. The light doesn't move in a straight line. The light concentrates, it shifts to the left and right like a river moving downstream. There is even an oily pool in the center of that light—water upon water. It is so strong it falls outside its corridor, leaves sparks that shock and dazzle the surface. Actually, rather than Shakespeare's Moon, it is a Fellini Moon, transferred from film stock to your everyday life.



PHOTO BY PAUL LISICKY



PHOTO BY LARRY GRABER



PHOTO BY JON NALLEY



PHOTO BY BILL TRACY

Paul and Petey at Polly Burnell's apartment, Provincetown, 2017; Patti Smith, Kathleen Graber, and Paul, National Book Awards ceremony, New York City, 2010; Paul and his editor, Fiona McCrae, Housing Works Books, New York City, 2016; Paul before a reading at the Perkins Center for the Arts, Collingswood, New Jersey, 2016

Paul

By Garth Greenwell

A BOOK TOUR IS A WEIRD WAY TO GET TO know a person, but I hardly knew Paul Lisicky when he agreed to do a handful of events with me in 2016. I knew his work, of course—his gorgeous memoir, *The Narrow Door*, had just come out—and we’d met in person once, over breakfast the year before at the AWP writers’ conference. But really his reading with me as I promoted my first book was an act of pure generosity, an experienced writer lending a hand to an anxious—a terrified!—inexperienced one.

Somehow it felt easy to get to know Paul on tour; he was genuine in a way traveling authors often aren’t, as if he could do without the armor most of the rest of us need. He was genuine after the readings, when we would go to a restaurant or bar to unwind, but also in the events themselves, where he spoke and answered questions with a kind of luminous vulnerability. I remember thinking that it was an ideal to strive for, a way of being in the world as a writer that let the work be a door opening in welcome, and not a shield.

The last of the four events we did together was in Iowa City, where I live. We read as part of the Mission Creek Festival, and a local gay couple, friends of friends, threw a party for us. It was the kindest gesture, and they went all out: the food was catered, the wine was excellent, there was even a local musician bowing a cello in the corner. But I knew almost no one there, and—though I type this cringing at my own ingratitude—it was more or less the last place I wanted to be on my only day home that month.

Paul took it all in stride, with his usual graciousness and charm. He had a way of making himself available to a roomful



Paul and Garth Greenwell at the Mission Creek Festival, Iowa City, Iowa, 2016

of strangers but also sticking close; I was grateful to him for not leaving me too much on my own. At one point, after maybe an hour or so, one of our hosts mentioned that they had put their two dogs in a bedroom upstairs. They were the sweetest dogs, the man said, but not the best behaved; they would have been leaping over everyone if they were out.

Paul and I shared a look, and then, after extorting permission, bolted up the stairs. It was as wonderful as we hoped: our host opened the door for us, apologizing in advance, and then we were assaulted by huge furry creatures unbelievably happy to see us. Dogs are the only kind of strangers I like, and Paul’s instinct was the same as mine: we dropped to the floor and opened our arms and let them jump all over us.

It’s one of my favorite memories of that year, and a moment that felt like the antidote for the terrible loneliness of a book tour: hearing Paul laugh as he was tackled by dogs, and feeling sure, as I still am, that he would be a friend for life. ▣

Lisicky

By Victoria Redel



Paul, New Bedford, Massachusetts, 2017



PHOTOS BY VICTORIA REDEL

AS I WRITE THIS I'M LOOKING AT A PHOTOGRAPH of Paul taking a photograph with his iPhone on a late winter drive we took to Provincetown. It's Paul in a perfect Paul world—an antique/junk shop, where he stands amidst the crowded swoop, perch, and dangle of metal birds and bugs, an aviary of someone's fantastical creation. Paul focuses with serious delight on the painted wings of one painted creature, part butterfly, part bird. What a bonanza for Paul—the natural world refracted through a stranger's particular imagination. So many odd spaces for his curious mind to consider—Who has crafted these? What spun this vision? And why did they wind up here? When we wander onward, we ignore settees and velvet armchairs in favor of a frayed wicker pram with porcelain dolls' body parts disconnected and bizarrely rearranged and then to a table strewn with maybe sixty red-and-white dice. And passing each tableau, of course, we spin the stories.

I love this photograph because it contains the pleasure of any day I spend with Paul, conversation ranging seamlessly from our current reading, to intricacies of feelings, to

hilarious stories, to light gossip, to music, to difficult writing choices—the braid of conversation slowed only when Paul says, “Look, look,” guiding me to notice the light brushing across a field's late winter

grasses, a red-tailed hawk cutting through the air to land on a high branch. And while this weave of serious delight is what I cherish about a friendship with Paul, it is more importantly what is so astonishing about the books he writes. “Look, look,” Paul's sentences say, look deeper, look with humility, with curiosity, with the possibility of being changed. For the gift of always being taken somewhere surprising in friendship and in art, I am beyond happy to be on this voyage with the ever-magical and full-of-world-wonder Paul Lisicky. ☒

Dillard Follows the Muse down a New Road

By Sue Harrison

MANY WRITERS, such as Victor Hugo, Sylvia Plath, and Tennessee Williams, have also been painters. Annie Dillard is one more writer who paints, and she has done so all her life. The difference is, now she paints but no longer writes. Her “retirement” from the writing life has been the subject of much speculation over the last several years. And though she speaks of it as a necessary step for her, she is not prone to talk about details. And, she says, she is open to reconsideration of the issue in the future.

It’s difficult to imagine that a writer as prolific and gifted as Dillard could turn away from the crafting of words. Early in her writing career, at twenty-nine years old, Dillard garnered a Pulitzer Prize for *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. She followed that up with muscular and graceful books, one after the other, that continued to reveal her take on nature, religion, memoir, human nature, and even how one lives the life of a writer. Reading her books is reminiscent of watching Nureyev dance. You see the strength, you feel the intent, and you are left breathless by the grace of execution.

She is hungry for knowledge, experiencing the world and shaping something concrete out of that experience. It used to be words on paper; for now it is painting. Although she has painted all her life, now, she told me, she wants to know more.

“I didn’t know anything, and knew I didn’t know anything, so I started studying the history of art on my own,” she said. “Also, you know, the creative process is completely addictive. You start out thinking, and it’s like a riptide. Just let it take you. It will deposit you somewhere else.”

She brings her full attention to everything she does, whether it is as mundane as ordering the perfect chair for the weathered deck at her house or as heady as poring over the latest science magazine and critiquing the conclusions it is offering up. And when you have the opportunity to meet her, as I did in our series of interviews, she brings that same concentration to the conversation. She pays attention at a level that few people ever do and, because of that, she sees things that others do not.

Dillard laughs often and easily. Almost any turn in a conversation will release a bit of her subterranean knowledge. She recalls freely much of the voluminous research she has done throughout her life for various



PHOTO BY SUE HARRISON

Annie Dillard in her Wellfleet art studio in the summer of 2017. The cigarettes and coffee cup are never far from reach.

books or just because something interested her. Her conversations are charming, funny, and occasionally dense with obscure factoids that she has gathered over the course of decades of reading.

She is astounding in the depth of what she knows, and she does not brook fools. She corrects any errors she encounters, whether she sees them in scientific magazines or hears them in chats with friends.

Not that she is unkind. She is never that. But she has on occasion let the strength of her opinions rule her commentary to the point that she once had “apology stationery” made up so she could send a quick note apologizing—not for being wrong, because she had been right, but for the manner in which she expressed that rightness. The stationery has a picture of her at the top looking a bit surprised with two large band-aids forming an X over her mouth.

“I had to stop writing,” she told me of her creative shift, “although I am a writer and nothing but a writer. There’s a thrill as the creative process takes a structured work both wider and deeper from an unexpected angle. I’m lucky to have been interested enough to study art history in old age in order to keep drawing and painting. Drawing and painting, in turn, invoke the creative process that keeps life productive.”

Her studio in Wellfleet is just a short walk up and over a hill and down a sandy path. It is a small garden shed with a door and two windows. At one end of its rectangular room is a table that doubles as her desk and painting area. There is an office chair that wheels around, giving her access to everything she needs. Opposite the door are shelves and cubbies filled with supplies and ephemera, and on the far wall across from the desk is a built-in narrow cot suspended from the wall at hip height. It is her opinion that every studio should have a place to stretch out and think. Above that is an old Salvation Army drum suspended on

the wall. It is silent, but its size and placement make it feel as if it had just stopped booming and the echo still shimmers in the air.

As I looked around Dillard's studio, examining the tools of both her trades, I asked her how the process of painting is similar to and different from her writing.

"In writing, you try out sentences in your head before writing them down by hand. Writing is thinking itself, awareness itself," she said. "Most of the time when you're painting, you just plunge in to try an approach or a change. As for the big deep thinking—the very point of a book—you outline. If I do big deep thinking in painting, I've never noticed it."

She told me that writing is very slow for her, and finishing a book can take years, compared to the immediate results of painting, and I asked her to compare the roles of conscious thought versus impulsive mark-making. "When writing, I doodle all over the page and often need to start again with a clean copy," she explained. "So switching to composing on a computer kept me focused on later drafts. But writing by hand produces more original work. 'Impulsive mark-making' to me usually means doodling; it has no place in either art."

Her painting has changed over the years. At one time, she did landscapes, some of them reminiscent of the hills of Provence or New England. But she's always had an affinity for faces and is now working on three different portrait series.

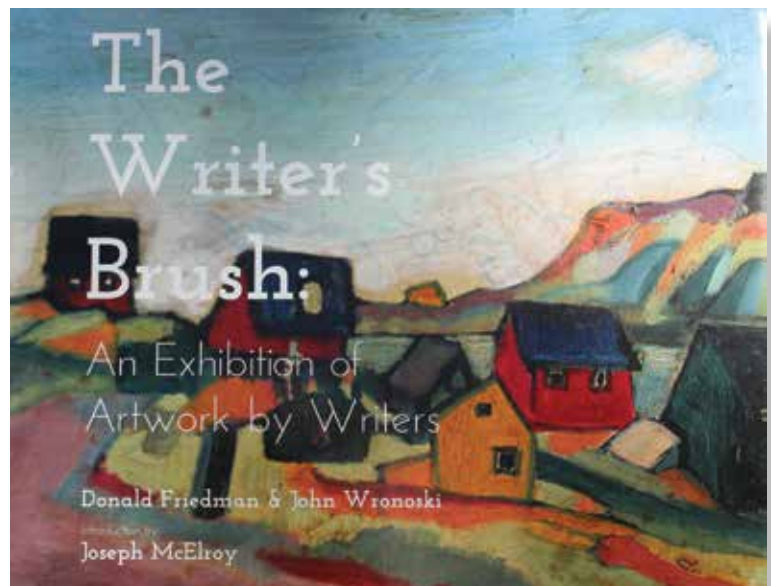
For the first, she had her husband, the biographer Bob Richardson, list and tally up all the different ethnic groups on earth, creating a world demographic. She is trying to find images of people in each group and is using these as a jumping-off point for portraits that will depict the human diversity in the world today, stressing our common humanity.

In the second series (a series all done on shingles, simply because she had them on-hand), she is painting portraits of revered writers before they became famous. There is a very young Primo Levi and a Leo Tolstoy who crackles with energy. She searches the Internet and then prints out photos she might use.

"When people are actually doing their important work, like Einstein as a teenager, they are scruffy, irresponsible looking," she said. "And then they get old and have all this white hair and, of course, they look like a great person. Well, that isn't who did that work. You know the writings of Primo Levi, such a good writer. In the later photos of him, he's distinguished, grown-up, with white hair. And yet, in the beginning, he was just a total mess of a teenager with his hair all over the place and crooked teeth. And he was brilliant."

Her third series is set against the backdrop of a misty lake. In each painting, two oversized heads emerge from the water, the chins still just under the surface. The people are not related in any observable way. A grizzled farmer is paired up with an angry Chinese infant. A girl with a parakeet on her head is caught in startled mid-shriek. These faces delight Dillard and she likes putting them together in ways that may appear to be non sequiturs but make perfect sense to her.

Every day she comes and paints and always, she says, there is the endless fixing of things already done. (Much like the writing process.) Amazingly, all of her current



work is based on photos that are probably under copyright and cannot be shown, much less sold. She doesn't care; it is the doing that matters.

"I am lucky enough to be able to paint without hoping to sell paintings," she said, unbothered that few people will ever see her current body of work.

AS A WRITER who paints (or draws), she is in good company. William Burroughs wrote and painted in an avant-garde style. Sylvia Plath painted in bright colors but used far darker words on the page. Henry Miller's watercolors, over two thousand of them, were quite sensual, like his written work. Victor Hugo's four thousand drawings were only shown privately—he was so concerned that his artwork might overshadow his writing that he kept them from the public eye.

There have been many articles and blogs about the subject of writers who paint but most agree that the seminal work is *The Writer's Brush* by Donald Friedman and John Wronoski. The book has been through two print versions as well as exhibitions that feature work by writer/artists; Wronoski, an antiquarian bookseller by trade, came on board for the second version of the book. While participating in the project,



(top of page) Annie Dillard's *Untitled Landscape* (ca. 1975, oil on board, 5 by 7 inches) on the cover of *The Writer's Brush* (above) *Untitled*, n.d., oil on board, 9 by 7½ inches; (right) *Self-Portrait*, ca. 1975, oil on canvas, 14 by 11 inches; both also featured in *The Writer's Brush*



he encountered Dillard and her art and recalled their first conversation: “Her first reaction when I told her about the project was, ‘You mean there are some writers who don’t make art?’ Which I thought was both quite natural and entirely unexpected, something like her general take on the world. By the end of the conversation, she was ready to send me some examples, and I was willing to show it sight unseen.”

And show it he did, in both the exhibition and the book. When I asked why he put her artwork on the cover, he replied, “From the moment I saw her work, I was charmed by the radiance and simplicity of it—it bespeaks a desire to enter the inner world of things, a joy in light,

a feeling for human community, and a subtle tinge of the mystic.”

Wronoski met with Dillard in Wellfleet and Key West and came away with a clear impression of her as a writer, a painter, and a person.

“Her writing is always a serious engagement with meaning,” he recalled, “and you can feel it throughout her work. She’s always reinventing, digging deeper, seeking to understand. I think she has truly felt what a human being can feel and made a more devout and concentrated effort to express it than most writers do.”

No one is more demanding or critical of Dillard’s work than she is herself. It takes whatever it takes to get it to the point where it meets her standards, or it does not see the light of day. Whether she is writing or painting, she wants everyone to know she is still very much living, reading, thinking, and producing.

“Thomas Mann wrote a keepable page a day,” she told me. “In so doing, he was an incredibly prolific writer. Sure, I may write four pages in one day, or eight pages—but those are pages I’ve begun in sheer boredom with, and rebellion from, the book’s established themes. Those are pages I will throw away. That’s why one writes many books. There was an idea I meant to develop in the last book—an interesting idea I barely mentioned—and I certainly didn’t do it justice or bring out its ramifications. That idea still intrigues me. It will be the chief theme of the next book—or the book after that.”



Steps Down to the Dune Shack, n.d., watercolor on paper, 7¼ by 6 inches (a painting of Peg Watson’s dune shack in the Cape Cod National Seashore, from *The Writer’s Brush*)

When I asked for more information about the topic of her next book, she said it will have to do with the combined mass of existing people, of how they relate, of what one perceives as important about others’ lives and deaths.

“I want to somehow vivify, so people actually believe it, how many people are alive now,” she explained. “How many were killed in this, that, and the other disaster? Does the reality of other people decrease, like gravity, with the square of the distance? Of elapsed time? Does the depth of other people flatten under such conditions?”

Perhaps, with so many ideas circulating, and so much more research to be done, new writing will emerge at some point. For now, she brings her extraordinary mind and spirit to painting, but leaves the door open to experiences of other kinds.

When I think of Dillard’s exuberance for life, I’m reminded of a quote from her book *The Writing Life*:

One of the few things I know about writing is this: spend it all, shoot it, play it, lose it, all, right away, every time. Do not hoard what seems good for a later place in the book, or for another book; give it, give it all, give it now. The impulse to save something good for a better place later is the signal to spend it now. Something more will arise for later, something better.

With Annie Dillard, in her many creative paths, we can be sure there will always be something more for later, something better. 📌

SUE HARRISON writes fiction, memoir, and non-fiction. Her travel essays and memoirs about Florida can be found on her website myoldflorida.com. She is a prizewinning journalist and was the arts and entertainment editor and writer for the Provincetown Banner, a weekly newspaper in Massachusetts, for fifteen years.

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Matthew Klam

THE STORY INSIDE THE STORY

By Christopher Busa



Matthew Klam

PHOTO BY MAXWELL MACKENZIE

LIKE THE BOXING RING, the psychiatrist's office, the artist's studio, the poet's study, and the lover's bed, the artists' colony in America is a privileged space where certain ordinary rules are suspended, precisely for the purpose of sponsoring self-discovery. For fifty years, the fertile creative nexus in Provincetown known as the Fine Arts Work Center has fostered seven-month residencies of ten writers and ten visual artists each year, now totaling around one thousand former Fellows, many of whom have gone on to achieve distinction. Here, I focus on the work of Matthew Klam, who was a FAWC Fellow in 1993, the year he was featured on the cover of *Provincetown Arts* along with his fellow Fellows, all standing on the parabolic rim of a sand dune, their feet planted in wavy wisps of dune grass. In a quote on the cover, Klam states, "Here at the Center, work becomes God."

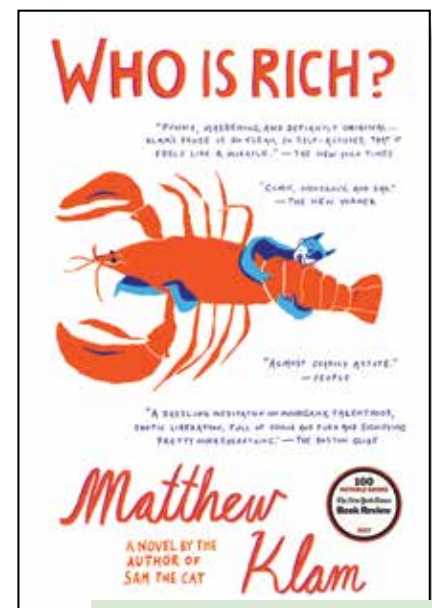
Besides Klam, the group included Paul Lisicky, our featured writer this year. Elizabeth McCracken, who remains close to Klam today, missed the FAWC photo shoot, at the time feeling compelled to stay in her studio and write. Also pictured is Lucy Grealy, who would soon be the author of the memoir *Autobiography of a Face*, a gripping drama chronicling the author's many reconstructive facial surgeries, which raised compelling social and psychological questions about beauty and identity.

Klam, to his great surprise, found that a story he had written during his FAWC residency, "Sam the Cat," was accepted by the *New Yorker*, which later hailed Klam as one of the best young fiction writers in the nation. Klam published six more stories, which were collected in the hilarious, highly praised *Sam the Cat and Other*

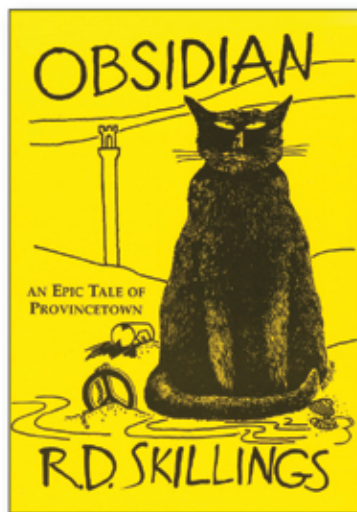
Stories (Random House, 2000). For the next seventeen years, Klam languished as he attempted to finish a promised novel, yet thrived as a husband, father, teacher of creative writing at the prestigious St. Albans School in Washington, DC, and author of stellar nonfiction pieces in *Esquire*, *Harper's*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and *GQ*. He also taught for stints at numerous short-term artist residencies, which he has described as "summer camp for grown-ups, where mortgage, job, marriage, parenting—you push aside." Klam's wife, Lara Cox, a psychotherapist, once told a reporter, "Matt can get to the core of human conflict faster than most people. He gets paid to write about what's going on in his head. Most people have to pay a therapist."

These seventeen years enriched Klam's life, even as the pressure to finish the novel increased. His teaching position at St. Albans, part of Johns Hopkins University, came to depend on publishing a new book. He could easily have collected his published nonfiction into a book, but he was focused on organizing a superabundance of keen detail as his conception of a character crystalized into the multifaceted, hyperalert persona of Rich Fischer. Perhaps Klam the novelist received an ironically comic gift when he was denied tenure the year before his novel *Who Is Rich?* (Random House, 2017) was published to popular acclaim.

However, a portion of reviews pointed out that Klam's Rich was "a hard person to like," "unlikeable," or, alternatively, described the novel as "the best dirty book of the summer." A review in the *New Yorker* called it "a gem within the canon of infidelity literature." In his *Boston Globe* review, Steve Almond took another tack, realizing that complaints against Klam's character were not especially directed at his adultery, however much this misbehavior haunts



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him with suicide-inducing guilt. “The novel’s genius,” Almond writes, “resides in the manic, self-lacerating voice of the narrator . . . a reckoning for men who have nestled into the comforts of domesticity only to discover themselves in a hostage situation.” According to reviewers, Rich’s central offense is that he articulates the miseries of monogamy and parenthood with such tender precision. He’s hard to like, in other words, because he makes the reader feel uncomfortable.

Rich is candid about the fading ardor in his marriage:

What I knew about Robin at twenty-six has since been overwritten by our twelve years together, by the fuzzing of boundaries that separate us, by events we faced beyond our abilities, by the sound of a four-note wooden xylophone our son likes to beat the shit out of at five A.M., and by the immutable cycles of birth and sleep.

His voice has an amped-up vitality, hypervigilant, as if suffering from a type of post-traumatic stress. My interest fastened on how this voice guides the reader by acting as a ventriloquist for the author. The perspective of a cartoonist or illustrator offers an episodic storyboarding alternative to the annoying kind of art Rich was taught in college:

So-called postmodern painting was being taught in a way I didn’t understand, as the

subject as object ran into ontological difficulties that couldn’t be solved with a paintbrush. I started making comics for some relief—leaning heavily on my own journals, since I’d never learned how to make up anything—an episodic, thinly veiled series of stories.

Klam’s narrator replicates salient aspects of Klam’s own early success publishing *Sam the Cat*; early on, Rich, too, enjoyed a wave of praise with his blatantly autobiographical graphic novel, *I Have Suffered Greatly*, the rage for a year and now long out of print. So very closely does Rich the narrator shadow the inner psyche of its author that his persona evolves into an uncanny double, an impish twin with special access to one’s secret faults. Page after page, this demon wordsmith whispers in Rich’s ear. Rich is driven to convert his illicit “affair” into a genuine “romance,” a natural consequence of his manic brain:

I wanted to tell my story, wanted to peel back the onion, uncover the mess, surprise my eyes with what my hand could do, alone at my desk at strange hours, heart pounding, pits sweating, cackling silently to myself and hoping I could shock the world. I connected to a second self, a deeper sense, a subaudible language of colors, shapes, of gnawing contradictions.

Klam vastly deepens the significance of the “story behind the story” by making storytelling the very subject of the classes at the conference. Everyone is trying to tell a story, and, with only a few days left before the conference ends, each is anxious to present it at a reading or an exhibit of paintings. Klam offers cameo sketches of dozens of such students:

They had four days to turn their thumbnails into finished pencil drawings, which they’d then ink and letter, scan and reproduce, and present to the world by Tuesday afternoon, in time for open studio.

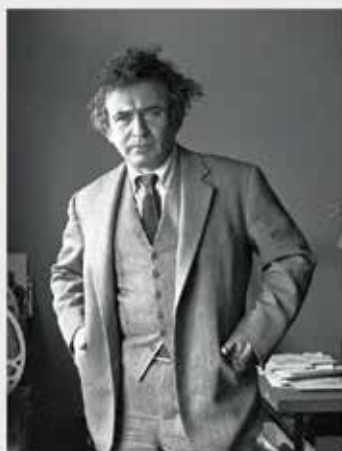
I asked if anyone needed help. Mel fumbled with her pencil sharpener. I heard crickets chirping in Sarah’s empty head. Then I walked to the back of the room and looked at the floor. I heard pencils and paper, the steady breathing of humans at work. I stood behind the printing press, my hands on the wheel, like a sea captain trying to get on course.

Klam simply teaches others what he knows about turning one’s own life into a shared legend, a community mythology. Here, we enter the world of magazines and graphic design and social pecking order. Klam puts a theatrical scrim between the top-drawer magazines and newspapers that he himself published in, hiding, much like Pirandello in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, showing his characters as visible or invisible depending on whether light shines from either the front or the back of the scrim. Klam’s insights into how illustrators work have

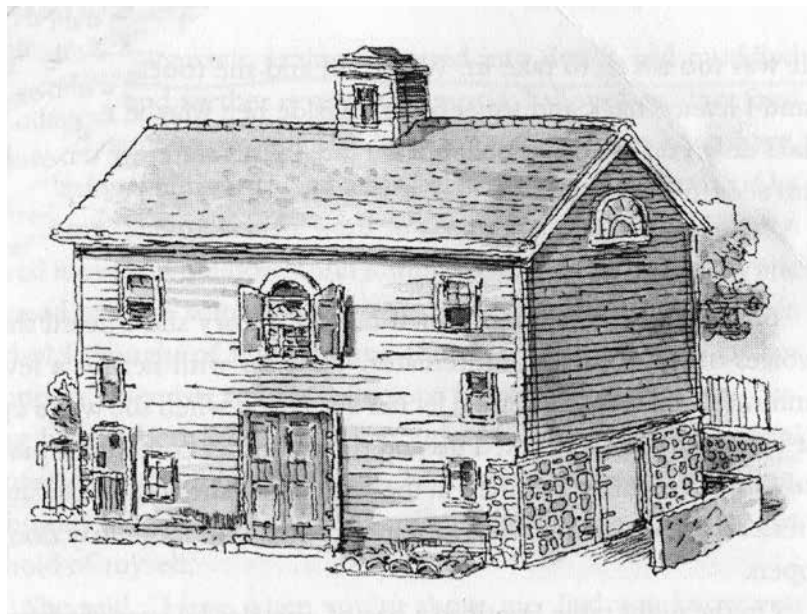
Celebrating the Life and Work of Norman Mailer

The Mailer Review

“There was that law of life, so cruel and so just, that one must grow or else pay more for remaining the same”



mailerreview.org



John Cuneo, illustration of the barn at the Fine Arts Work Center, included in *Who Is Rich?*

the authority of a practitioner. (Klam himself once took a workshop in cartooning.) I was curious to see if Klam would use his own drawings to illustrate the book; instead, the goofy drawings were done by the celebrated John Cuneo, known for his bubble-bodied caricatures—a caricature being the exploitation of a striking characteristic, exaggerated to the point of ridiculousness. Rich uses material from his own life:

I told stories that hit close to home, that were crucial to my existence, of love and sarcasm and maddening envy, daily mortification, sexual pity and raging insecurity, stylized fictionalization of stuff taken from my life. I stole the moral and ethical problems of friends and relations and gave them to imaginary beings.

The essential difference between fiction and nonfiction is found in the identity of the narrator. In nonfiction, the narrator is the author. In fiction, the author is not the narrator, who exists as a persona of the author. Klam conjures a younger version of Rich Fischer in the person of an up-and-coming rival, Angel Solito, a young novelist with a controversial best-selling graphic novel about his experience as an eleven-year-old boy walking and hitchhiking all the way from South America to California. “Solito was young enough to be my son, if I’d had a son at fourteen,” Rich observes.

Consider a word from the book’s title, *rich*, which possesses such a range of connotations. The husband of Rich’s paramour offers Klam access to issues out of his normal range. Now he can understand his poverty from the complaints of the rich, offering intelligent insights into how corruption is disguised in dark money flowing from corporations to political campaigns. Amy, the cheating wife, comes to the conference to learn to make paintings that will soothe her despair over her son’s crippling illness. She is married to a billionaire banker, oaf-like in his boorish behavior and proud to donate large

sums to tea party candidates who don’t believe in climate change. Rich asks why she remains married, then realizes she associates her husband’s “unyielding stupidity with masculine power.” Amy’s intimacy with wealth and power allows Rich intimacy with his enemy, the very elements of society that his cartoons seek to skewer. He is privy to how this husband “managed the savings of workers while maiming their rights through his philanthropy.”

Another angle of orientation is supplied by the interaction between Rich and Angel, in which Rich’s doubts about his waning creative potency are contrasted with the younger writer’s ebullient, natural confidence. In the campus common room, the two blunder into each other and sit at a table, awaiting the start of their classes.

It was like some idiotic cartoonist conspiracy.

“Ready for class?”

“We’re learning how to tell a story.” . . . I couldn’t think of a single thing to say about teaching, even though I’d planned my lecture and my class was starting in five minutes.

“Can’t teach the story,” [Angel] said. “That’s *in* you. That has to come *out*.”

In the title itself, *Who Is Rich?*, Klam questions the nature of identity and storytelling. What is the nature of fiction and memoir? Is it autobiography if parts of it are conflated? What if fiction is mostly made of facts? A man at a cocktail party talks to Rich about autobiography: “There’s a difficulty in any kind of autobiographical writing. It’s a stew of self-analysis, reporting, biography, imagination, and also some heat, a core of wanting.”

Which brings us back to the “literature of infidelity.” A novel allows separation from the author and his alter ego in a way that releases a writer from any inhibitions of personal guilt. The author of *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* (1952), Ernst Kris, observed that the absolution

from guilt for fantasy is complete if the fantasy one follows is not one’s own. There’s a great psychological freedom and escape in the realms of fiction, both in the writing and the reading.

Klam is also a writer who celebrates the body with the rolling accumulation of catalogued details that denote the swagger of Walt Whitman: “What was the point of having a body? Intellectual life was not so satisfying that we could afford to relinquish the physical.” In Klam’s novel, inspiration and libido are bedfellows, turbulent in their mutual attraction.

The book possesses a strange, extended, bittersweet denouement that concentrates on ways to refract the events of the book through a lens of reflection. Rich remembers eating shellfish at a campus party: “The big, slimy oysters I’d eaten while they were still alive. Did they swim inside me?” Klam’s direct access to somatic consequences offers visceral understandings that complement the story line.

Would it ever end? Would I spend years sadistically refashioning events, squeezing life’s nervous contradictions into scene and action. . . . Would this go on until the secret history and madness lost its power, the familiar click in my heart replaced by a cooling, a nostalgia, and a sense of camaraderie?

Klam leaves us with the sense that, for him, an ending is only an interlude, and that the end of the conference is not the end of his creative life:

We were twenty miles out in the ocean, on a skinny piece of sand, bathed in light. . . . We came for the light, the nearness to nature, the solitude, the convergence of elements. It hummed. It grabbed you and pulled you in every direction. It drove you back to something in your memory, made you want to try to repeat it. It made you crazy. It gave you hope or sex or courage.

Klam speaks through narrators who are more or less reliable, showing “how any light that passes through that lens is shaped, bent, divided.” An interlude can become a perfect memory when the promise it offers shows how much better the future might become. Rich ponders, with gravitas extreme, if he will ever be rich again, and Klam’s poignant conclusion about his future shows the journeyman’s sorrow and sadness in letting go of heartfelt accomplishment.

The conference had helped me to return to meaningful work, but I’d lost faith that the project would gird me. Instead, a darker feeling filled me with longing. I imagined myself years into the future, and felt the inevitable letdown of having produced anything at all, of putting myself into it and giving it away.



CHRISTOPHER BUSA is founder and editorial director of Provincetown Arts Press.

Lord's Eye

AN ODYSSEY IN SEARCH OF POLITICAL TATTOOS

By Matthew S. Hinton

"Whenever you get a tattoo, you are inviting the artist to leave a touch of how he sees the world on your body. It is a uniquely intimate experience. In many ways your tattooer is like your priest, scraping the confession you choose to be reminded of every day into your flesh."

— John Buffalo Mailer, "Lord's Eye," Part 1



PHOTO BY BRAD BARRY

Matt Hinton sporting his "Mailer for Mayor" tattoo

THE SKIN-MARKING TRADE is an ageless one. Nearly every culture on the planet includes inking in some form or another, from the women of ancient Egypt to modern American military recruits, and tattooing has had a foothold on nearly every continent and era in between. While there is little serious literature about the topic, John Buffalo Mailer—writer, actor, and youngest son of Norman Mailer—wrote a serial article for *Inked Magazine* profiling Josh Lord, which is probably the closest we will come to reading so intimate a portrayal of this particular type of artist. Mailer's series itself was an exercise in patience: it was over thirteen thousand words written in eight parts and took nearly two years to complete, from 2012 to 2014. While it's fair to surmise that there have been many Josh Lords along the way, there are few practitioners who bring such inherent gravitas and timelessness to this fine art, akin to a Picasso or Da Vinci of the skin. And in a surreal pattern worthy of Lord's iconic designs, Mailer's story of meeting Josh Lord led to my own journey to collaborate with the artist.

My pilgrimage to Graceland, Josh Lord's tattoo parlor in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, began on November 12, 2016, a Saturday. Four days earlier, Donald Trump had won enough votes in the Electoral College to be named the forty-fifth president of the United States, and worse—there would be traffic. I edged my way into Brooklyn in search of John Buffalo Mailer's apartment. The radio was reporting barricades up and down Manhattan; Eighth Avenue was pumping with protesters from Columbus Circle to the White Horse Tavern. The yellow lights of the Holland Tunnel felt oddly safe, and I needed to be subterranean for the weekend.

I had last seen Mailer—or "Buffalo," as I call him—a month earlier in New Jersey, when we had attended the annual Norman Mailer Society conference. Since I have spent the bulk of my professional life as a scholar of the legendary author and assisted in the research for his official biography, and because both Buffalo and I are playwrights,

a friendship had quickly developed between us. I had even assigned "Lord's Eye" as an experiment in my Advanced Expository Writing course at Misericordia University, a small institution in northeastern Pennsylvania. My goal for the class had always been to keep the reading material fresh and recent and relatable, and Buffalo's profile of Josh Lord fit that criteria quite nicely. The feedback my students gave was more than I expected—"Lord's Eye" elevated the conversation of the classroom. In an era of disposable culture, these students were now exploring their own questions of permanence and mortality. One afternoon, they rolled up their shirt sleeves and pant legs to compare ink—Buffalo's story gave them permission to tell their own stories. Indeed, it had even been enough to inspire me to get my first tattoo: an Al Hirschfeld portrait of Groucho Marx on my right arm, inked by one of my first college writing students—a talented young illustrator and tattooist by the name of Whitey Ellis.

Buffalo had been impressed by all of this. So impressed that he made a very unexpected proposal, one that I couldn't refuse.

"How would you like to get tattooed by Josh Lord?" Buffalo asked.

"That sounds like fun," I said.

The planning took several phone calls, pitches, and patience, but the day finally came. As Buffalo and I left his apartment, en route to Josh Lord in a minivan, I suddenly realized I was about to become a character in a piece that I had taught.

NOW, I AM ONLY just old enough to remember when tattoos signaled that someone was an outsider, a rebel, and possibly a threat to social order. I never did it myself, but I had witnessed people cross a busy street when they saw an ink-covered, leather-clad ne'er-do-well standing in their way on the sidewalk. Through "Lord's Eye," I had learned a great deal about the history of tattooing in America: that electric modern tattooing had been born in the Bowery over one hundred years ago, and that New York City had become a mecca for tattooing among the diverse day laborers who lived in the area. I learned that tattooing had been illegal in NYC until 1997.

Since those days, there has been a sea change in America—a shift away from seeing every person with a faded black heart on their forearm as a member of the Hells Angels, and toward

something that gives permission to the storyteller in each of us. In the months leading to my weekend expedition, I found myself asking people about their tattoos. "What's the story of this one?" I would say to inked individuals and, without fail, bits and pieces about their lives would tumble out of their mouths. It didn't matter that most of them were strangers to me—they talked about their autobiographical marks, skin-murals that catalogued milestones, fandom, inspirations, births, deaths, rebirths, as if we were old friends. I met sisters with matching Irish knots in Kelly green, their three points symbolic of each of the young women. I saw cartoon characters of sentimental value, glyphs and family crests, quotes written in Aramaic, Latin, Spanish, and American English. Buffalo had asked Josh Lord "to design his sigil and permanently emblaze it on his shoulder." He was fascinated with the medieval notion of sigils, symbols that magicians would choose to represent the various angels or demons they prayed to. Your sigil was a sign of fealty to your gods, a show of dedication to the team.

Not all tattoos have such memorable meanings. I had witnessed the craftsmanship of precision-point artwork, sure, but I had also uncovered the "bad ink" of sloppy lines drawn by amateurish hands; ink that had been injected too deep into the skin, resulting in a cloudy "blowout"; and poor likenesses of faces famous, infamous, and unknown. Through this anecdotal research, I learned what I liked—the

stories—and what I didn't like—unoriginal ideas poorly executed. The same thing that drew me to read Ray Bradbury's *The Illustrated Man* at the age of twelve, that drove me to assign Buffalo's profile of Josh Lord, and to tell my own stories onstage and in the classroom is what compelled me to appreciate and eventually sit for my own tattoos—a desire to share, a need to listen. Tattoos and tattooing, I came to realize, were an exercise in empathy.

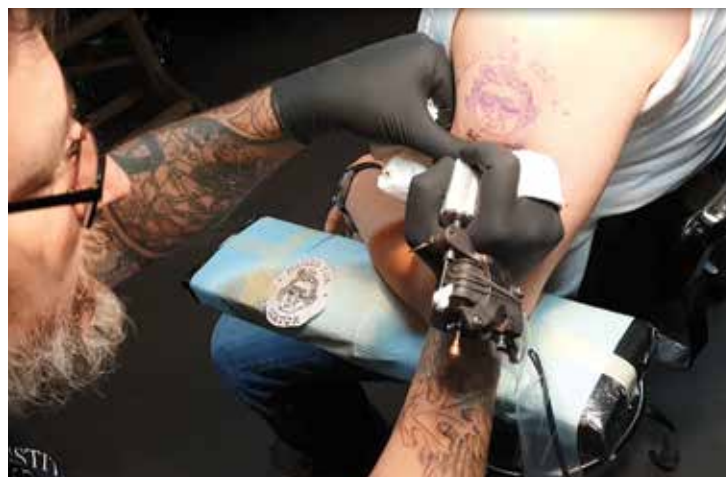
"It is dangerous to be friends with tattoo artists. One can easily slip out of the normal social restraints of getting a tattoo, and start to see it as something that makes a Saturday night just a little more special. For it is impossible to sit in the room with Josh Lord working on your shoulder . . . without understanding the allure of becoming covered in ink from head to toe."

— "Lord's Eye," Part 6

"Chaos is fun."

— "Lord's Eye," Part 5

BUFFALO AND I TUMBLED out of the minivan onto Lorimer Street, and the fading November light made the overpass at the corner look like Brooklyn's answer to Stonehenge.



Josh Lord at Graceland working on Matt Hinton's tattoo

PHOTOS BY JOHN BUFFALO MAILER

Spray paint tags of “Pranik” and “211” peppered the steel pillars holding up the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, some resembling hieroglyphics, others looking like prison tattoos reading “Kilroy wuz here.” I was reminded of Norman Mailer’s *The Faith of Graffiti* and his eloquence on this unusual art: “Perhaps that is the unheard echo of graffiti, the vibration of that profound discomfort it arouses . . . the herald of some oncoming apocalypse less and less far away” and “Graffiti lingers on our subway door as a memento of what it may well have been, our first art of karma.” Mailer and his son had this in common: they both had the

ability to see and express the value of drawings that most people would not find beautiful or even consider to be art.

Amid this intersection of modern city-life, warm light highlighted the welded letters of the tattoo parlor: GRACELAND. As we went in, the sound of Leonard Cohen’s music bled out into the street. On the right half of Graceland, a few women sat beneath towering portraits of Elvis Presley, while stylists with sleeve tattoos teased, steamed, snipped, twisted, and colored their hair. To the left, there were more barber chairs and wheeling surgical stools and lights, mirrors flanked by bottles of pigment, needles, and trays. And, on the back wall, a floor-to-ceiling library bulged with books of art, volumes of all manner, most of them filled with bouquets of transfer paper bookmarks—a telltale source of inspiration for tattoos of all styles and influences.

Josh Lord, the legendary New York tattoo artist, stood in the back among the tomes, looking somewhat bookish despite his T-shirt, jeans, and spiky hair. He had a benevolent smile and was nearly finished bundling his right arm in plastic wrap. Lord was protecting a fresh tattoo of a crow’s head, a cover-up done in onyx-black ink, which captured the shine of feathers and eyes—its beak was poking out through the torn edge of cellophane at Lord’s wrist. The artist welcomed Buffalo with the warmth of an old bar buddy, and with news: Josh Lord had just returned from

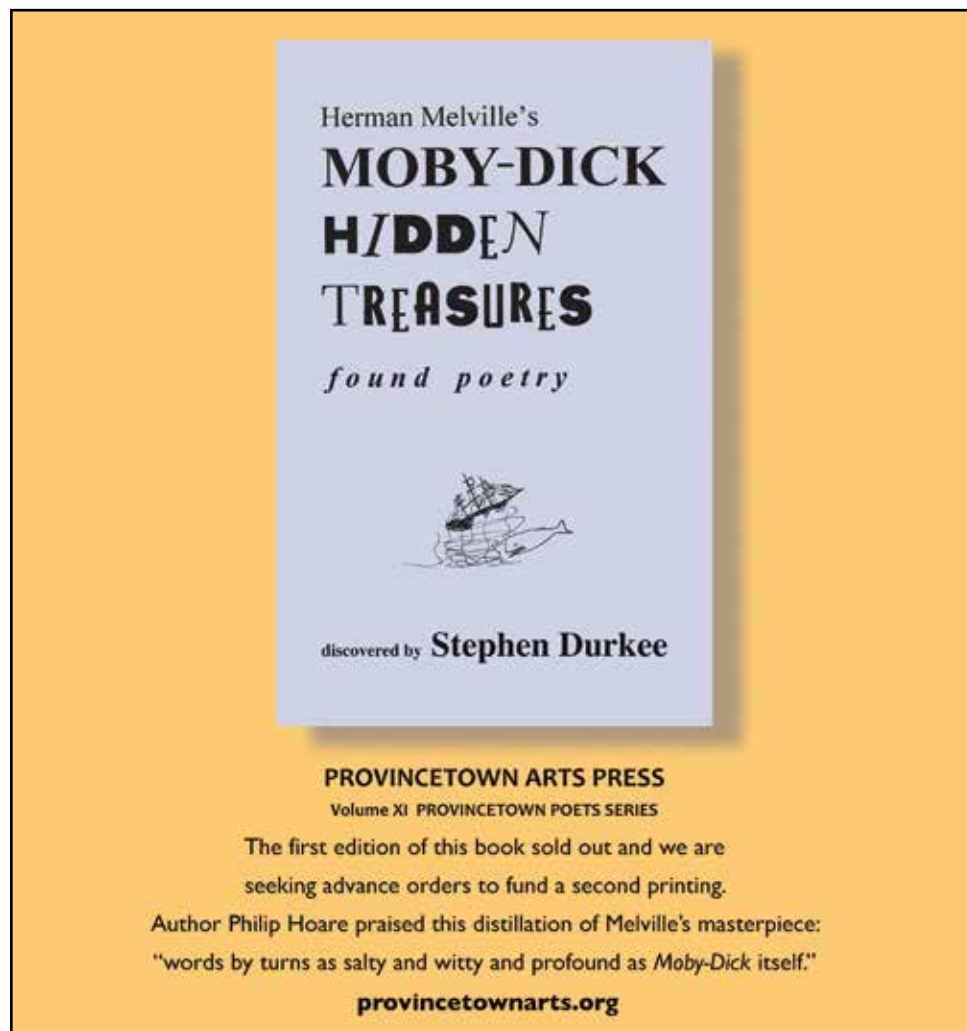
a well-deserved vacation, complete with getting married. We shook hands, and I commented on an orc sword on his wall, which led to somewhat nerdy swordplay that went on for far too long. But soon we were ready to talk about sharpened steel of a different variety, and I showed him my first tattoo. He immediately recognized the shoe polish eyebrows and signature cigar. “Hey, you had a good artist,” Lord said. “The ends of Groucho’s hair are excellent—those curly tips are a hard detail.” I told him about Whitey Ellis, and how he’d been my student. “It’s good work. I like it. I like the swooping lines. He really captured Hirschfeld. Great tattoo.”

I showed him a drawing of what I hoped would be my next tattoo design: a caricature of Norman Mailer’s head in the style of a *New Yorker* cartoon, with the words MAILER FOR MAYOR above and below the author’s coiling hair and impish grin. Mailer had run for mayor of New York City in 1969, with a platform of making the city the fifty-first state. The image and words had been moonlighting as a drink coaster at the Waverly Inn, and soon, I hoped, it would have a permanent home on my left arm to balance out Groucho. I felt in that moment that tattoo artists were almost like fortune tellers, that their craft is in the family of what Mailer called the “spooky art.” It was for these reasons that I needed this tattoo—to wear a part of my own quest, my lifelong fascination with Norman Mailer, on my sleeve.

Lord suggested that we all have a drink to unwind and get to know each other. He’d had a long day. We soon found ourselves in a booth at the Battery Harris, a Caribbean-themed surfer bar a block and half away from Graceland, a place with all the trappings of a Key West dive: airy windows, drink boards written in pastel chalk, and palm trees wrapped in multicolored Christmas lights. Lord and Buffalo caught up on their respective relationships. Lord’s recent marriage had been a surprise ceremony, intimate and sweet. Buffalo, on the other hand, had gone his separate ways from Katrina Eugenia (a key figure in the eight-part *Inked* profile), the two having grown in vastly incompatible ways over the six years they were together.

Sometime during all of this, Lord revealed to me that, when melted, the plastic linings of government issued bootlaces make for good black pigmentation in prison tattoos. I managed to log that bit of trivia for one of my writing endeavors, and drew a line in my notebook back to some scribbled words about the overpass at the mouth of Lorimer Street. The three of us then left Battery Harris, and Lord announced that he would need twenty minutes to prepare the image. He recommended that we go to yet another corner bar. “They have a drink you *need* to order,” Lord told me. “It’s called the ‘Gunther.’”

In the dark well of a cocktail lounge known as the Night of Joy—a room with high-backed upholstery, antique sconces, and a ceiling painted to resemble a bed of stars (I later learned that Josh Lord had painted the constellations



himself, he was an artist of all canvases)—I ordered a Gunther.

"Buffalo had forgotten how much needles bite when they get their teeth onto one of your sensitive parts. He had missed this particular pain. It always came with that adrenaline, that unique feeling that occurs whenever people take the look of their skin into their own hands by changing it permanently through someone else's. What a great fucking high! A thought flashed through Buffalo's mind: In many ways, ink is very much like weed. Not only do tattoos act as a bridge between almost every class, culture, race, and gender, like marijuana, but getting a tattoo also gets you a little high."

— "Lord's Eye," Part 2

BY THE TIME Buffalo and I returned to Graceland, Lord and I were ready. We talked about the placement of Norman's head, and I declared that my tattoo was to be a badge of sorts. I have a vague memory of smacking the top of my left arm at the shoulder and shouting something like, "This shall be my author arm—first Mailer, then a gonzo fist of Hunter S. Thompson, then Dashiell Hammett over here, and Raymond Chandler beside that. And maybe something about Gilgamesh to honor John Gardner, probably written in the original cuneiform!" The other arm would eventually be home to all of the Marx Brothers, and possibly Buster Keaton, Bart Simpson, and Charley Chaplin; a comedy-sleeve for the ages.

A trace of the design was made and applied using a thin transfer paper. I lowered myself into the barber chair and relaxed my arm on its padded edge. Lord donned surgical gloves, tilted his glasses a touch, and made his approach with the needle. The initial sting felt like a pinch—a cat's claw probing the surface of the skin and staying there. It brought the same warmth as when I sat for Groucho, and I felt myself understanding ink addiction—each tattoo could easily be as exciting as my first. People get tattoos that are intertwined with their personal quests, and permanently marking one's body with art is an exercise in existentialism, in journey-making.

From a barber chair in a refurbished garage in Brooklyn, the universe expanded and contracted before me. Leonard Cohen slipped back in the song rotation, his voice blending with the buzzing of the needle, and I asked Lord what he thought about Cohen dying so soon after the election. Lord shook his head and said, "What a poet." I thought about

singing along, until I imagined what it might mean for my left arm and reconsidered.

Too soon, the buzzing stopped. Lord looked up and in his best impression of Trump declared the operation a "yuuuge" success. Buffalo eyed the piece and said "sideburn." Lord had forgotten Mailer's right sideburn, but quickly made it right. I did not know it at the time, but Josh Lord had done six tattoos that day, and it was a testament to his powers of endurance that he was able to keep his focus on one more project after-hours in Graceland. Lord was a true-to-life working artist.

With the work done, the celebrating—more drinking—could begin, and Buffalo and I headed to a local Williamsburg bowling alley and bar known as the Gutter. Lord declined—he had a wife to go home to. At the hipster bowling alley, I noticed the full-sleeve tattoos on the young woman who doled out the shoes and lanes, and told her about the piece I had just gotten and how it came to be. We swapped tales of ink like flash-autobiographies—a secret handshake of our respective expeditions. I secured a lane in record time.

Sometime around 4 a.m., after hours of bowling—mostly gutters and a few strikes—I climbed the stairs of Buffalo's apartment alone. He had dropped me off and was staying at his new girlfriend's apartment for the night so I could have a bed. I watched *SNL*'s cold open on my phone—Kate McKinnon was dressed as Hillary Clinton, playing a grand piano and singing Cohen's "Hallelujah." The evening felt like a salve, a balm for the wounds caused by the election. It was dark out. Trump's America was coming, and apathy and confusion were already making the air sickly sweet. But I was now armed with Groucho (the angel clown) on my right, and Mailer (the insatiable devil Hamlet) on my left. Two Jewish demigods. One a cheeky, cigar-gesturing seraph with shoe polish on half of his face, a master craftsman of the American stage; the other, a risk-taker, tight-rope walker, wartime consigliere and contemplative soul, a captain of the American page. They would be my constant companions from now on, my own personal sigils, talismans in an increasingly uncertain world. ▀

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JAMES JONES FIRST NOVEL FELLOWSHIP



Erin Kate Ryan

Quantum Girl Theory unfurls from the contradictory, implausible, and true-false newspaper coverage of the real-life disappearance of eighteen-year-old Paula Jean Welden from her Bennington College dorm room on December 1, 1946.

I first learned of Paula Jean Welden when I was a grad student at Bennington, researching a story by Shirley Jackson, “Missing Girl,” a rare and uncollected piece that was written while Jackson lived in North Bennington and was said to be based upon local reaction to Welden’s disappearance. This information, which dovetailed with my interest in the function of literary missing girls—as the catalyst for others’ stories, as diminishing the personhood of women on the page—resulted in my MFA thesis project, a hybrid performative piece that included Welden’s disappearance as a key component. This, in turn, led to the project of this novel.

Each chapter follows a life that Welden might have lived after placing her hand on the door-knob: from faded Vegas showgirl to novice nun, from literary forger to clairvoyant girl detective. Missing girls are only missing to the people they leave behind. So perhaps Paula Jean Welden never disappeared: maybe she knew where she was all along.

Quantum Girl Theory

~ ghost hunter, 1947 ~

THE NUNS ARE BUILT of shoes and skirts and dangling keys. Obeying an invisible upward gust, their habits balloon from their bodies. If someone, the hand of God, reached down, grasped them by their wimpled skulls and shook, they would probably ring like bells.

The Girl has been awake for several weeks, unmoving on her cot. She doesn't speak, but she watches the nuns' bell-bodies traffic around the infirmary floor. Every one of them walks with purpose—there is no pausing, dallying, or surveying when faced with a divine to-do list and fifteen ailing nuns.

She thinks it's fifteen. Several times a day she tries to count the other cots, but loses the thought before the end each time. So this

Sister Edwin, whose speech pattern differs from the others in emphasis and melody, is equally brisk but is kinder than Sister Joseph. Sister Edwin meets the Girl's eye as they change the dressing on her ankle and foot, and tempers Sister Joseph's admonishments with, "Lass, you must listen to Sister Joseph and stop fidgeting so."

"Aye," says Sister Joseph. "She can choose not to heed me, but she'll lose that leg most certain. I've already requested a bone cutter in the next supply order."

The Girl is not frightened.

When the Girl first awoke in the infirmary, there was another young woman occupying one of the cots: Sister Felix, the novice who had sprained both ankles in a tumble down the rectory steps. Sister Felix was a companionable presence, and not the least bit dissuaded from her chatter by the Girl's persistent silence. No one else was answering her; the other cots' inhabitants slept through the day, an untrained orchestra of aged soprano snorers.

"The Angel Brigade," Sister Felix said one day, catching a slight movement in the Girl's brow as a coughing fit erupted on the other side of the room. "They lie here, half alive, secretly pleased to be suffering so long for the Lord," she whispered. She gestured with her Bible at the splints on her ankles. "If I could believe my suffering was for the glorification of the Lord rather than the polish on Father Helmsley's kitchen floors, I might have a more sanguine attitude about my own confinement."

Sister Felix's confinement wasn't indefinite, though. After two weeks, she was hobbling with crutches, and a few days later sent back to her own cell. Since her departure, she's returned just once to visit the Girl; she stayed only ten

minutes, likely finding the Girl's silent companionship much less appealing now that she had the wide world open to her. Before she left, she placed a chipped statue on the Girl's bedside table.

"Saint Anthony," Sister Felix said. "He's the patron saint of lost things and lost people. You must place your finger on his foot and say—you may recite it internally, I'm sure—'Saint Anthony, Saint Anthony, please come down. Something is lost and cannot be found.'"

The ditty was immediately caged in the Girl's mind, and now she has no choice but to hear it echoing—a trapped and frantic bird whistling, someone is lost and cannot be found.

The day that Sister Felix left, the other nuns started dying. It seems to the Girl, with her long tenure in the infirmary, that Sister Felix was a puff of air, and now that she's gone, the lungs of the nuns have deflated. Three have gone in less than one week. Sisters Joseph and Edwin, unaffected by the passage of their charges, strip the cots down to the mattress ticking and remake the beds with coarse white sheets just in time for the incoming shuffle of new patients.

The Girl imagines that somewhere outside this room is a line of broken nuns, each waiting for her turn to release her muscles on the stiff surface of a cot and relinquish the toil of her existence to the long suffering of wasting death. And it occurs to her that her presence might be keeping some overdue nun on her swollen feet, polishing the rectory steps that Sister Felix scuffed as she fell.

The Girl feels no guilt.

It is March now, Sister Joseph says. The infirmary's window is a relentless blur of raindrops and the weak gray light unchanging, whether noon or nine. The Girl remembers March.

is her mere estimate: fifteen ailing nuns and a mysterious girl with no name.

They speak of her and to her in unvarying volume. Sister Joseph, face the color of a sugar pumpkin (here, she notes her recollection of the color of sugar pumpkins; could she have been a farmer's girl?), complains of her increased burden with no regard for the Girl's feelings.

The Girl observes these encounters without interior consequence. She's taken to thinking of herself this way, as *the Girl*, and thus all happenings are filtered through the gauze of someone else's experience. The Girl's fever has spiked, the Girl's breath has turned to rotten eggs, the Girl's symptoms are resistant to Sister Joseph's antibiotics. The Girl has no past, the Girl has no voice.

It is March and Sister Edwin is visiting family and Sister Joseph alone ushers the broken nuns into their beds and tidies the dead ones into the afterlife, where, doubtless, they stand in another limping line, waiting for cleared space in heaven. The Girl suffers the loss of Sister Edwin's buffering kindness, and Sister Joseph is delighted to castigate the Girl over the care of her injured leg.

"The bandage is covered in filth," declares Sister Joseph. "Dirty girl. Dust is drawn to you like a magnet." The Girl notes the mental image she gets at the word: horseshoe-shaped, white and red. Perhaps she was a science teacher, leading pink children, goggles and bubbling beakers.

"The infection is not abating," says Sister Joseph. "I'm going to call in Dr. Whitmore. He'll be in the convent next week to see to Father Helmsley's cough." Sister Joseph changes the dressing; the Girl does not speak.

The Girl is not dirty. The Girl is a ghost hunter.

It is languor, not locks, that keeps the nuns in the infirmary, and no one guards the doors at night when the Girl rises and drags her lame leg behind her across the infirmary floor. The corridor outside has never been electrified, and a single gas lamp burns near the window at the opposite end. The Girl spreads her wings and braces herself on the corridor walls as she moves toward the chapel nave.

Sister Felix says there are ghosts in the convent. She whispered her witness to the Girl in the night: the dislocated items, the keening outside the building's great wooden double doors, the cold spots in the chapel. Here in the nave, the Girl hears the keening outside the doors.

The Girl is not frightened. Some nights, she opens her voice and keens along. Her voice is a hairy, foreign presence in the nave, and it rises



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like a vulgar hymn until it shatters at the ceiling and then showers back down on her.

The Girl limps around the chapel, feeling for cold spots. As ever, the coldest spot hovers in the third pew, left of center. The Girl sits just beside it and places her hand on the frigid wooden seat.

If the Girl had a past or a name, she might have whispered, "I, too, am missing like you," but the Girl doesn't know who the *I* would be. Her thoughts are all in third person, when they claim a person at all.

Someone is lost and cannot be found.

The cold spot is like a moment of *empty* in the chapel. If someone painted this, they might capture the quiet presence of the Girl, the richly realized greens and browns of the walls, the bleeding red of the tile floor, and leave the canvas untouched in this spot of cold nothing beside her.

This is the spot where the Girl was found, weeks and weeks ago. A red parka, pink underclothes, bare and brown-streaked feet. She was not sleeping when she was found, or at least her eyes were open, but she was so unmoving that the altar boy screamed loud and high, thinking her dead.

The Girl does not remember this. She does not remember the scream, nor the pew, nor whatever brought her there in such a state. She remembers only the nuns with bodies like bells and the infirmary and Sister Felix's ghost stories. She comes to this spot to hunt for ghosts

and clues, and because she has begun to puzzle out that the ghost might, somehow, be the Girl. That the cold spot is the empty place she left in the world when she disappeared, an emptiness that follows her like a shadow or a cloud tethered with a string.

The door to the sacristy opens and Father Helmsley enters the nave. His presence is intrusive and blunt—the Girl has seen only nuns since she awoke. The father's demeanor is squarer and fills more space; the nuns conduct their movements with an efficiency lacking in self-consciousness, while Father Helmsley walks with an assumed authority over his surroundings. He presses a light switch and obliterates the Girl's dark and calm. The Girl feels a tickle in her shoulders as he approaches.

Father Helmsley strides as if to take the empty spot of pew beside the Girl, and then hesitates before seating himself on the bench in front of her, twisting his torso and hooking his arm along the back of the pew to face her.

"Sister Joseph has reported to me of your progress," he says. "I hear there is renewed concern over the persistence of your injury."

The Girl has been seated so as to cradle her injured left leg on her right knee. She presses her hand to the heated part of the bandage, the part that tells her the infection endures. (Here she notes the reflexiveness of this knowledge; a nurse, perhaps.)

"Sister Joseph is a competent caretaker," he says. "Attentive. During the war, several dozen returning GIs were sent here each month from Fort Meade for care. I believe that many of them chose to live simply for fear of incurring Sister Joseph's disapproval." Father Helmsley chuckles in obvious self-pleasure.

The Girl does not remember a war.

Father Helmsley reads the Girl's expression and hides the remainder of his chuckle in a cough. "I'm the one who brought you from this spot to the infirmary," he says. "It's unheard of for us to take in members of the public, other than the soldiers. You are a lucky girl."

The Girl thinks of Father Helmsley's thick arm wrapped under her lower back, his hands on her hip and the skin above her knees.

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He shifts in the pew. “Of course, I was—and we are—humbled to provide succor to any of God’s children, yourself included.”

The Girl does not know succor.

“You spoke that night,” he says. “You cried out the entire length of the corridor, and you moaned from your cot all night long. When Sister Joseph and I asked your name, you said you had none. When we asked about your home, you said you had none. But when the boy first brought me here to this spot where you sat, I asked you then if you were ill. You looked not at me but at the door and said, *I think I am brand new.*”

The Girl hears this without remembering it.

“Of course, the reason you said it is a mystery beyond my powers of comprehension,” says Father Helmsley. “But I think of it from time to time. You know, we are all new as infants in the warmth of Christ’s love.”

The Girl’s heart is beating through her injured leg.

“And this.” Father Helmsley ticks a finger toward the Girl’s bandaged leg. “In Luke 13, Jesus heals a woman who has been crippled for eighteen years. And in Matthew 9, he heals a crippled man begging outside the synagogue.”

The Girl notes Father Helmsley’s use of the present tense, giving the impression that the events happen on a constant loop, or that Father Helmsley doesn’t understand that there is a point at which past rushes into present, and ends.

“In Mark 7, Jesus heals a mute by spitting on his own finger, touching it to the man’s tongue, and saying to him, ‘Be opened.’” Father Helmsley places his fingertip on his tongue. “Shall I?”

The Girl withdraws from him with a shift in her muscle tension.

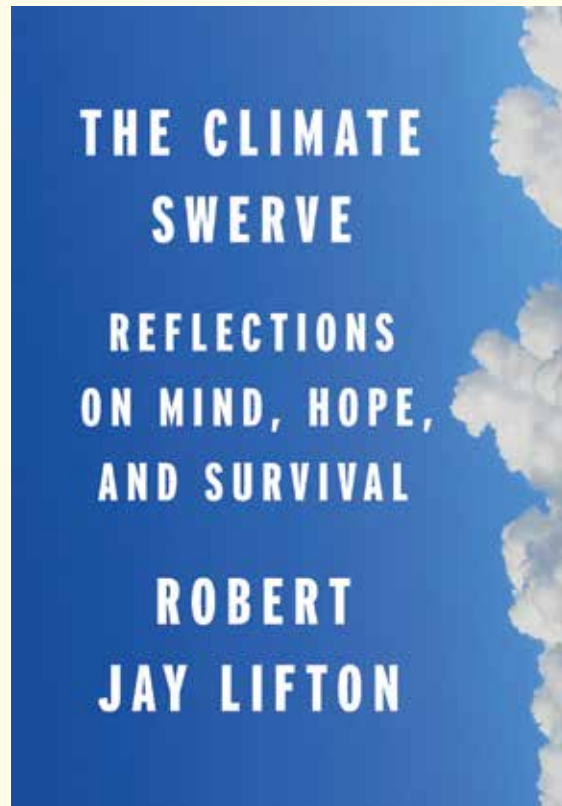
“Ahh,” says Father Helmsley, wagging his damp fingertip in the air. “Then prayer is the best course for you.”

He pushes his solid self up from the pew. “Consider these miracles as you say your prayers, my girl, and have faith,” he says. He raises a flat hand in the air, canted as though to slice between them. “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

The Girl does not move as Father Helmsley crosses back to the sacristy door, shutting the light at the threshold. “Be opened,” he says, as he turns back into the chapel to close the door behind him.

The Girl is open; she is only openness, she is an antenna, she is a bowl. She is unmade, unpainted. A girl-shaped spot of bare canvas in a chapel, in the woods, in the world. 🏠

ERIN KATE RYAN’s fiction has appeared in journals such as Glimmer Train, Conjunctions, the Normal School, Hayden’s Ferry Review, and Booth. She’s a McKnight Artist Fellow and the recipient of several additional fiction awards. Erin Kate holds degrees and student loans from Bennington Writing Seminars and Boston University School of Law. She’s committed to literature as an act of resistance and an agitating force for social justice.



The Climate Swerve: Reflections on Mind, Hope, and Survival

By Robert Jay Lifton

The New Press, 2017

A BOOK REVIEW BY MARK ADAMS

NEW ENGLAND’S recent string of turbulent northeasters are still underway as I write this, underscoring a mind-set that keeps us in shock about our climate’s future. Wedded to our habits, we resist a changing world that is literally eroding under our feet. Provincetown’s Herring Cove Beach has lost its 1950s hurricane-proof bunker of a bathhouse, and the 1920s asphalt parking lot has dissolved like sugar into the surf. A new Cape Cod National Seashore parking lot plan, designed to resist the surf for about forty years—a model of “adaptive retreat”—will receive close scrutiny before the concrete is poured and the storm cycle accelerates. The Cape’s coasts were poorly understood until recent work by Dr. Graham Giese at the Center for Coastal Studies, which advanced a century of shoreline surveys that started in a new dawn of post-Civil War utilitarian measurement. I play a role in this story: Giese and I helped to introduce GPS to the Cape’s coastal survey methods bridging the traditional sightings and dory lead lines that had changed little since the dawn of map-making.

Cape Cod is an ephemeral eyebrow of glacial till reworked by waves over a few thousand years, but the cycle is advancing as a hotter ocean and spreading polar vortices put our beaches into a constant spin cycle. We never got used to this slow evolution, and now the clock speeds up as we move faster toward new coastal landforms. To remain complacent is now quaint. The Cape Cod summer has always been flavored by poignancy

and slowed time, but our strip of land is more plastic than ever, pulled thin like the saltwater taffy in a Commercial Street window.

Enter the timely and compact philosophical essay by Robert Jay Lifton, *The Climate Swerve: Reflections on Mind, Hope, and Survival*. Lifton, who for decades has channeled deep and fateful philosophical ideas in the constellation that links the Cape in conversation with East Coast urban intellectuals, takes his cue from the lost-and-found Epicurean “swerve” that Stephen Greenblatt chronicled in his 2011 book titled *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern*. Greenblatt brings us Lucretius, a mysterious outsider of the first century BC, who wrote an epic poem called “On the Nature of Things”—rediscovered in the fifteenth century, when empiricism began to lift the blinders of authority and religion. Similarly, Lifton’s *Serve* calls for a shift in cultural thought spurred by science and observation.

Lifton’s body of work on the victims and perpetrators of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima focuses on “ecocide”—humanity’s thoughtless environmental totalitarianism in the form of nuclear warfare, global contamination, genocide, and, now, climate sabotage. He is equally concerned with the souls of politicians as he is with their targets in nature. Even now, the resurgent Right asserts the righteousness of waging politics as if it is launching versions of some apocalyptic Death Star.

As a psychologist, Lifton diagnoses us with “malignant normality” and calls for witnesses

among the professional classes. The era of nuclear weaponry promoted the normality of Hiroshima, the means to an end that makes sense at ten thousand feet and persists now as trained professionals surgically distribute explosives by drone from computer screens in dark warehouses. The witnesses are hooded by technology, and only the real bystanders, heard distantly on the ground, know the splatter of warm blood. Ironically, the residue of nuclear warfare’s failed romance is being refitted into the neat trophy rooms of the world’s worst dictators (and perhaps some future suitcase bombs). Ecocide morphs to fit our current global pathologies, power seeks a weapon. Climate response extends political power and makes the environment another weapon.

As Lifton states: “With global warming . . . the catastrophic future is increasingly visible in a disaster-dominated present: in the high temperatures, droughts, extreme fires, and coastal flooding now occurring throughout the world.” He calls global warming “the ultimate absurdity,” to be countered by a climate swerve, a manifestation of collective imagination merging science, politics, and social capacity to “find our way toward climate sanity.”

At an astonishing pace, so many of us have become witnesses to the storm surges, clear-sky flooding, dyssynchronous floral blooming, and balmy January days that Lifton’s climate swerve is now made plausible, a shift in how we think and live. Living by the coast, visiting clam flats,

facing storms, and surfing the weather, all residents of Cape Cod, townies and seasonal urbanites alike, experience a unique way of life that brings real immersive experience to what might otherwise be an air-conditioned existence. Sensory mapping of wind and water can override closeted intellectualizing of the human niches we’ve made. Nothing cracks open the thinness of urban invincibility like inundated subways and a week without the electric lifeblood of heat, lights, water, and cell service. This felt awareness can mobilize us, but the steps toward environmental ethics are still steep.

The question remains: what should the moral response to climate change be? Deniers deny while the US Navy elevates its ports. We untangle our moral dilemma by recycling, reusing our shopping bags, and driving a hybrid. The Internet hums with advice: beef has a notorious carbon footprint, but do we also give up Chilean raspberries and settle for Eastham turnips? Packaging and plastics are bound for the Pacific gyre since China is choked with our recycling. Ethical living is a merit in itself, but our big corporate institutions need to swerve. Economics will apparently squeeze out the worst fossil fuels from our electric grid, but we also need to dim the lights, not just at home but in manufacturing and transportation. And even if we can do all this, what kind of world will we leave behind? Is an engineered utopia our best hope?

The affluent will polish their merit badges to live simply, reduce and reuse, while the greater burden falls on the marginalized. Again, power imbalances and social injustice ensure that refugee populations will be neck-deep in the flood. The Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar, routed violently to the floodplains of Bangladesh, become a distant object lesson for the elites. Can our climate swerve take on institutionalized oppression? For the rural poor there is no rescue bus, no relief shelter in an Astrodome. Ultimately, the unlucky are pushed off the livable planet.

Lifton calls for us to resist “psychic numbing” and embrace “the expansion of awareness and identity that characterizes the climate swerve in general . . . a capacity of the individual self for mutability and change.” He describes this capacity as Proteanism, from the Greek sea-god Proteus, whose shape-shifting echoes the adaptability that has seen our species through multiple ice ages. Acknowledging the “species self” is fundamental to the climate swerve, expanding our identity from family and nation to a global kinship. The fractured planet that calls for us to change may also create the change. Start with hip waders and an immersive walk that smacks the senses during the next salty Cape Cod gale, fostering and savoring the shellfish beds while they last. 🌊

MARK ADAMS is an artist, educator, and cartographer living in North Truro, who has worked for the National Park Service for twenty-five years and shows paintings at the Schoolhouse Gallery in Provincetown. His favorite mapping tools are his running shoes.

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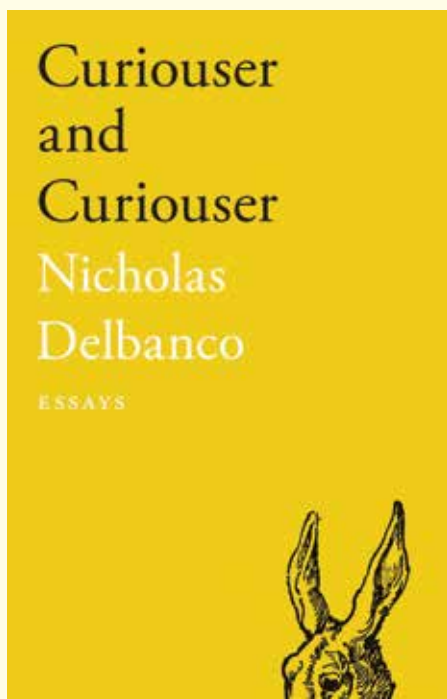
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Curiouser and Curiouser: Essays

By Nicholas Delbanco

Ohio State University Press, 2017

A BOOK REVIEW BY MARY MAXWELL



"THE VOICE OF the accomplished author will be a chorale," writes Nicholas Delbanco in *Curiouser and Curiouser*. The image is evocative of the author's own writing in his latest essay collection, a volume that reveals itself as a musical composition, with repetitions and variations of thematic material weaving in and out of its unfolding. Coming in the middle installment of "Towards an Autobiography," a composite prose piece that concludes his book, Delbanco's observation arrives as an apt description of his own literary career.

Curiouser and Curiouser opens with "The Countess of Stanlein Restored," a narration that chronicles the two-year restoration of a Stradivarius cello belonging to Wellfleet's own Bernard Greenhouse, Delbanco's father-in-law. Once again, the matter of "voice" makes its way to the front of the stage. The issue in the case of the cello's reconstruction is not one of literary or rhetorical figure, however, but a quite concrete, and audibly detectable, matter of tone and sonority. It is the crucially unique thing that, at all costs, must not be lost in the complex process of repair. There is much anxiety on the part of Greenhouse, as well as the master luthier René Morel, about what is at stake. Delbanco personally followed the process taking place at the Morel workshop over the course of 1999: "It was rather like attending a much-loved patient in a nursing home or, more precisely, a hospital: the Countess of Stanlein lay broken,

shattered, albeit on purpose, and then in surgery and traction and reconstruction, until little by little she was healed."

Greenhouse, whose life was devoted to the collaboration that occurs between musician and instrument, described his art's sonic potentialities as analogous to "what a painter does with the palette." It soon becomes self-evident that Delbanco's own idealization of the creative act, while extending to the sister arts, finds its most immediate manifestation in the written word. His sentences approach music:

In such a dream a cello floats upon the perfumed air. Ethereal, corporeal, it is the shape and very contour of encapsulated sound. Its archings are perfectly rounded and smooth; its varnish gleams; the purfling lends a definition and a darkness to the edge. From volute scroll to seamless rib the pattern of the wood itself is intricate with melody, suggestive of a promised plenitude: yet resonant, yet mute.

I myself know a little something of the unique "lusciousness" of the Stanlein sound under Greenhouse's bow, mostly from recordings of the Beaux Arts Trio. Yet Delbanco's verbal re-creation of Greenhouse's sound, in his first public performance with the restored cello in 2000, reinforces my own memories of an evening in Wellfleet some years later, when Greenhouse played a Catalan folk song transcribed by his teacher Pablo Casals:

It's a simple melody, an evocation of birdcalls and flight, an easy line to play and difficult to master. This is mastery. Greenhouse has his eyes half-shut, his old head bending heavily, his feet and hands and body engaged, his cello in his arms. . . . The audience erupts. Greenhouse rises, bows, accepts flowers. "He has moved beyond music," the man to my left, standing, says.

Curiouser and Curiouser closes on a slightly ominous note with a 2017 self-portrait, initially set in the village of Wellfleet, where the now-retired teacher of writing continues to summer in the renovated Greenhouse home:

The vegetation is salt-laved: scrub oak and pine, cranberry, bayberry, poison ivy. The hills are low, the dunes high. Much of the area has been protected by the Cape Cod National Sea Shore, but all remains at risk: the roads are clogged with traffic, the aquifer diminishes, and the cliffs erode.

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What follows is a semi-comic interlude describing the recycling system at the Wellfleet Transfer Station and Recycling Center, where “every item has its place and all can be redeemed.” Retirement and redemption come hand in hand. After fifty years in the profession (first as the director of the Bennington College Writing Program, then in Ann Arbor), life for Delbanco becomes unexpectedly fragile, as he finds himself in 2016 (not unlike the restored Greenhouse Stradivarius) in a University of Michigan hospital bed, having literally been brought back to life by a “gaggle of blue-coated personnel.”

Between these seemingly diverse essay book-ends, a chronology of the author’s life and writing career is introduced, events and publications circling back and then ahead over the course of a set of overlapping essays. Literature finds its inspiration and analogue not only in music but also in the visual arts. One piece of the teacherly advice attends to the matter of “having an eye”: “When the self-conscious author casts about for subject matter, he should pay attention to the visible, audible world.” Given that his own father was a painter, and his uncle, an important gallery owner in London, Delbanco’s interest in painting and sculpture was, so to speak, inherited: “A Visit to the Gallery,” is the author’s meditation on a lifetime of museum-going. On this activity, he writes that, as a child, “I simply assumed it was what people did and how they viewed the world.”

Among the repeated content in *Curiouser and Curiouser* is the history of Delbanco’s parents, German-Jewish refugees in London before coming to America, whose troubling yet poignantly romantic story is first outlined in “A Visit to the Gallery.” We hear of this background yet again in the essay “Curiouser and Curiouser”; another version appears at the start of “My Old Young Books”; and we meet it once more in the first section of “Towards an Autobiography,” prose that was first published as an encyclopedia entry in 1985.

The story of Delbanco’s literary and cultural origins (the Italian family name derives from seventeenth-century ancestors in Venice) is not without considerable interest, of course. And in a set of memoiristic essays, some overlap is a given, especially since the nature of the essay collection as a genre is that it “repurposes” previously published periodical essays and magazine articles. Such repetition, as I’ve proposed before, may be seen as thematic recapitulation, each iteration acquiring additional resonance and meaning. But also found in Delbanco’s book are pieces that evidently belong elsewhere, such as his introduction to a set of reprints (“My Old Young Books”) and his contributions to biographical reference works made redundant by the Internet (the fifty pages of “Towards an Autobiography”). Leaving the Wellfleet dump, Delbanco had observed, “I’m seized by the conviction that what I’ve done is similar to what I also do each day: distribute words on a page.” To be blunt, much of what he’s accomplished in *Curiouser and Curiouser* strikes me as a book version of his household recycling.

Though the story of how Delbanco became a writer is a legitimate subject, certain details in the autobiographical interludes come across as showing off. The family’s Meissen and Rosenthal china make an appearance more than once; mention is made of the family’s Berlin house, on which Albert Speer worked; there are digressions about paintings—a Sisley, a Rembrandt, and a Rubens—owned or sold, etc. It’s not that such stage-set contextualizing is irrelevant, but it does pall. In this light, his recollections of certain friends of his parents, such as the philosopher Ernst Cassirer and the author H. A. Rey, come uncomfortably close to name-dropping. The extended but somewhat disjointed “Curiouser and Curiouser” feels nothing so much as an excuse to tell the story of his meeting with Rey, Curious George’s creator, the shaky ventriloquist who “threw” his monkey’s voice for the entertainment of the Delbanco children: “‘Voice.’ I have been trying to throw it all my writing life. . . . Yet in some central way I date my love of the profession to the sight and sound of H. A. Rey being foolish in our living room.”

Which is not to say that Delbanco is unaware of his manipulative and self-congratulatory tendencies. As a five-year-old, Delbanco learns how to influence adults: “My first lesson in the way of the world’s rewards: cry persuasively enough, and a beneficent committee may give you second prize.” So, too, the listing of his works and

awards, whether gained through accomplishment or tears, comes to what some parents might call bragging. In Delbanco’s defense, whatever self-puffing occurs in his book’s pages might be seen as a response to the professional times. Self-promotion is the present mode, when “the phrase ‘an author’s career’ has a faintly timeworn feel to it, and the ring of anachrony; given the tweets and blogs and self-published memoirs that proliferate today, it has never been simpler to write.” What comes as a surprise is that at the book’s close, despite the thirty-eight books of fiction and nonfiction listed at the book’s front, he arrives at a writerly modesty as unanticipated as it is inaccurate. His own conclusion: “Mine is a minor career.”

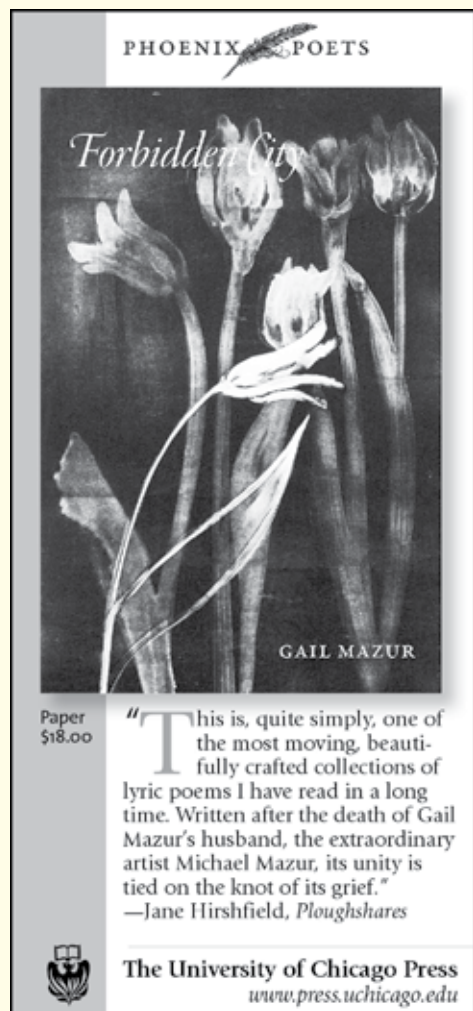
In principle, Delbanco should be in a position to judge. As he himself admits, much of his time has been spent in the “career” of writing and teaching; in this, he is nearly representative of “the professional writer” of his generation. As a writing teacher with a series of influential academic appointments, he regularly served on important prize committees, fully engaged in what he himself calls “the ‘business’ of contests.” By his own reckoning, he read thousands of contemporary works.

Yet I myself dispute the terms of his “minor” self-summation. The only important literary victory, as Delbanco well knows, is not judged by contemporary colleagues but is achieved through a very long game played across time. One of Delbanco’s heroes, Ford Madox Ford, could not have found much consolation in his own “minor” literary reputation at the time of his death; and yet, with each year, Ford’s accomplishments grow more solid and sure. Many of Delbanco’s own sentences, such as the following, are worthy of Ford’s own literary “maestro,” Henry James:

It is seldom possible to gauge beforehand what will prove a fruitful topic, which anecdote will fire the imagination; some matters move us, some do not. The writer gleans windscraps; he listens whenever he can. Each day is full of instances; what counts, as with all stimuli, is the sympathetic response.

For myself, I return to Delbanco’s observation about visual art, that “what’s here is here” and that the greatest works are deserving of “extended attention.” While the book under review provides brief, and occasionally imperfect, excerpts from his writing life’s accomplishments, vocal mastery such as Delbanco’s will only reveal its full excellence in the course of years to come. ▢

MARY MAXWELL’s writing has appeared in the *New Republic*, *Partisan Review*, *Raritan*, and *Salmagundi*, among other publications. The winner of a *Discovery/The Nation Prize*, her fifth collection of poems, *Oral Lake*, was published this spring by *LongNookBooks*.



A Generous Vision: The Creative Life of Elaine de Kooning

By Cathy Curtis

Oxford University Press, 2017

A BOOK REVIEW BY DENISE DOHERTY PAPPAS

Elaine de Kooning: An Artist in Life

WHILE THE PREVAILING record of women artists before the 1960s has long emphasized their personal and professional struggles, Cathy Curtis's refreshing biography, *A Generous Vision: The Creative Life of Elaine de Kooning*, presents an engaging counter-narrative. This portrait of Elaine de Kooning documents her importance in the New York art world, as a celebrated painter, and as an influential art critic and teacher. She was also a vivacious, beloved social catalyst who succeeded in living life "her way."

Elaine de Kooning, née Fried, was born on March 12, 1918. Her father, Charles, was a baking company manager from German Protestant stock. Her mother, Marie, descended from Irish Catholics, was a lover of culture who provided a large literary and artistic diet for her favorite and firstborn child. Sadly, when Elaine was just six, Marie was institutionalized for a year, most likely suffering from postpartum depression. Once reunited with her family, Marie shunned all cleaning, cooking, and housekeeping chores, and Elaine later followed suit in her own household. Ultimately, the family stuck together and Elaine remained very close with her three siblings and their offspring.

A very good student, de Kooning attended Hunter College in 1936 but preferring drawing to German; she transferred to tuition-free Leonardo da Vinci Art School and later to the American Artists School on West Fourteenth Street. Coming from a traditional Republican family, de Kooning was transformed by the liberal, creative educational milieu. "And I just felt this is living," she later remarked. Her first artist boyfriend was fellow student Milton Resnick, a Ukrainian immigrant who sold his blood and ran the school's elevator to make ends meet. De Kooning basked in the art school's mission "to make artists with minds as well as hands," a lifelong direction she carefully maintained.

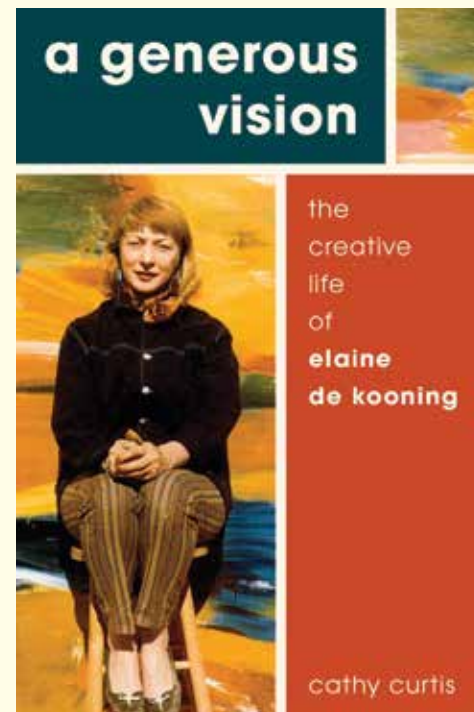
Accounts vary as to when Elaine met her husband-to-be, but some time between 1936 and 1938 in New York City, she met Willem "Bill" de Kooning, a Dutch-born artist fourteen years her senior. According to abandoned beau Resnick, Bill "seduced her, by teaching her art." They married in December 1943, the bride twenty-five, the groom thirty-nine. Each had a separate studio in their 2,500-square-foot thirty-dollars-a-month rental apartment. The couple took turns being each other's model and art assistant. They ate at Automats. They had long-standing friendships with fellow artists; they attended parties,

political debates, studios, and galleries. Elaine basked in this artistic freedom; she fearlessly debated men at the Cedar Tavern and the Club, a famed artist salon of the period. At one point, when money was tight, Bill asked Elaine to follow the example of many other artist-wives who took day jobs to support their husbands. Showing her moxie, Elaine replied: "I never ask you to get a job. Don't ask me. I want to paint just as much as you do, and I'm willing to starve along with you."

Bill absolutely did not want children and Elaine agreed. She described in an interview how she felt when she saw young mothers in Washington Square Park: "I looked at them with *pity*! And they looked at me with envy." Child-free all her life, Elaine was also a much loved "Auntie Mame" to her nieces and nephews. She encouraged their creative play and took them on trips abroad. Her nephew Guy Fried described her "permissive-aunt" persona: "She had no superego, and much more id than our mothers. . . . As a child, you could do no wrong."

Notably generous, de Kooning's favorite advice was, "Take care of the luxuries and the necessities will take care of themselves." She once rented an enormous apartment just to see all of her paintings in one place simultaneously. Her goal: "I had some money for a trip . . . and I decided to take a trip around myself." Author and photographer John Gruen recalled her vitality and wit, which stood out even among the distinguished crowd of artists at the Cedar Tavern: "Elaine loved art, but she seemed to love people even more." In 1984, de Kooning helped to raise legal defense funds for another friend, Margaret Randall, who was facing deportation. Randall wrote: "If you came to Elaine with a problem . . . before you finished telling her about it she was actively involved in its solution."

Elaine loved dance and movement and this was reflected in her many paintings that celebrated bodies in motion. In the late forties, years before LeRoy Neiman, she painted basketball players making a jump shot. Her Abstract Expressionist sensibilities found inspiration in the "image of all these figures together. . . . like a group figure with . . . many arms and legs." Critic Hilton Kramer said she seemed to aspire "to do for baseball something akin to what Degas achieved in horse racing." She also painted the bulls that she had observed in Mexican bullfights. While she wasn't squeamish about the blood (it was only paint, after all) she was disheartened by the tragedy of the animals' inevitable deaths. In 1983, after observing the cave



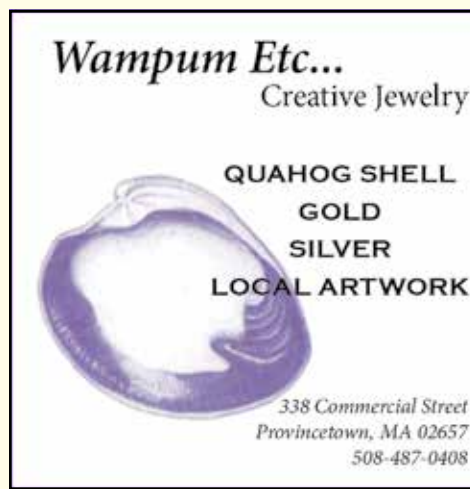
paintings at Lascaux in the Dordogne region of France, which included depictions of ancient horses, deer, and bison, she felt a tremendous identification with the prehistoric artists and began to create her own paintings of these animals. Struck by her first sight of a Paleolithic drawing, a "crude and powerful bison," she marveled at the immediacy of the work and the unusual juxtaposition of scale in these images. "That kind of helter-skelter mix enthralled me," she later recalled.

De Kooning was also a celebrated portrait painter. Most famously, in 1962 she was commissioned to paint President John F. Kennedy's portrait while he vacationed at Palm Beach. In eleven months, she completed thirty-six canvases—one is currently on display at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC. Alas, de Kooning was scheduled to present her work to the Kennedy family on November 25—three days after the president's assassination in Dallas. Many critics agree that "E de K" (as she signed herself) did her finest work in her portraits. Her studies of Bill, Fairfield Porter, Tom Hess, Harold Rosenberg, and Alex Katz each record her artistic take on these famous men. By including these images in the thirty-one plates in the book, author Cathy Curtis provides a comprehensive look at de Kooning's work and enriches the reader's ability to visualize the important figures in her life.

De Kooning, a talented art critic, quite charitably believed her function was not to judge but rather to "open doors" for fellow artists. In 1948, she was hired as an art critic at *ARTnews*, and over the following decades she wrote dozens of articles that illuminated artists and their times, from Renoir to a who's who of American artists of the fifties and sixties. She spent the summer of 1949 in Provincetown, where she sat in on classes with Hans Hofmann. Bill was also part of the Provincetown art scene, visiting her

from time to time that summer. She featured Hofmann in her 1950 essay “Hans Hofmann Paints a Picture,” and wrote about other notable Provincetown artists, including Edwin Dickinson, Franz Kline, Mark Rothko, and Peter Busa.

Her sole criticism was for Pop artists seeking fame: she believed one’s reputation should be a by-product of successful artwork, not a motivating factor. Her collected essays, *The Spirit of Abstract Expressionism: Selected Writings* (George Braziller, 1994), are an excellent example of the range in her work. In her later years, de Kooning made notes for a never-completed memoir. Her working title: *Always In Love with Bill*.




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Deborah Dionne, Manager

From its onset, her union with Bill always included multiple partners in an open marriage. Their love, however, suffered a huge breach when, shortly after Elaine had a hysterectomy, Bill’s lover, Joan Ward, gave birth to his daughter, Lisa, in 1956. Ever upbeat, a game-faced Elaine quipped, “How wonderful. . . . Bill and I always wanted a baby.” Neither Elaine nor Bill sought a divorce because their married status left each of them unavailable for undesired second marriages.

At age forty, no longer living with her husband, de Kooning pursued many teaching assignments around the country, beginning with work at the University of New Mexico. For the next twenty-two years, de Kooning was a much admired mentor at twelve nationally known universities. She especially enjoyed working with committed graduate students who were passionate about their art, ready to take risks with their craft. She used examples of old master paintings to stimulate new creations. Graduate students appreciated her insider information about the art world, while she encouraged them to follow their instincts. One such student, Jim Tochton, later her studio assistant, explained: “She just convinced me that the world is bigger than the canvas.”

A true democrat, de Kooning taught an art workshop at Vacaville Prison. She said: “The guys behind bars were more amusing and charming than the guys who were running the country.” She supported the 1961 Cuban Revolution and made donations to Native American homeland causes. De Kooning painted *The Burghers of Amsterdam Ave.* (1963) in an homage to the Dutch masters. Her “burghers” were male clients in a methadone clinic, a sign of her times.

Because (as the song goes) she was “pretty and witty and bright,” de Kooning was constantly the beneficiary of the male gaze, which suited her just fine. Her talent, her ambition, her graciousness, and her beauty assured her queen bee status. While she worked in a man’s world in a male-dominated career and culture, she was always kind to her gender. In the early days of second-wave feminism, she disdained the women’s liberation movement’s calls for female inclusion and parity. De Kooning claimed she was content working in isolation. She believed female artists, like their male counterparts, were sometimes rejected because of inferior work rather than sexual politics.

De Kooning’s take was very much like that of fellow artist Helen Frankenthaler, who was ten years her junior. The two women were introduced by critic Clement Greenberg. Both had enormous self-confidence. Frankenthaler once said, “For me, being a ‘lady painter’ was never an issue. . . . I don’t resent being a female painter. I don’t exploit it. I paint.” De Kooning and Frankenthaler shared a gallerist, Dord Fritz from Amarillo, Texas. He showcased de Kooning in *7 Contemporary Artists* in 1957 and Frankenthaler in *The Women*, a 1960 exhibition featuring nineteen women artists. Over time, however, de Kooning adapted a more feminist-friendly

understanding of women at work. She supported the Equal Rights Amendment, and in 1986 she applauded the opening of the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC. She commented that such a museum might have seemed patronizing years before, “But now it does make a certain sense in that museums have neglected women artists.”

Artist Lee Krasner—whose husband, Jackson Pollock, was Bill’s rival—once told Elaine, “You have the heart of the tiger.” De Kooning “chose to take this enigmatic remark as a compliment, ‘but it was an attack.’” She disregarded suggestions that her affairs with notable art critics Harold Rosenberg and Tom Hess were career-motivated on her behalf or on behalf of her husband. Plainly, she enjoyed their company at a time when multiple liaisons were de rigueur in her social set.

On the other hand, de Kooning’s life wasn’t all partying and painting, and the 1960s were a particularly painful time for her. She suffered an unproductive year while she went through a serious depression following the Kennedy assassination. Her mother died in 1964, and her close confidant, Frank O’Hara, died in an accident two years later. Her long-term social drinking caught up with her and took a physical and emotional toll. In that decade, de Kooning was responsible for at least three drunk-driving accidents. By the midseventies, though, she had joined Alcoholics Anonymous and, with psychotherapy, she was in recovery.

A lifelong smoker, she developed lung cancer and in 1985 had it surgically treated. Ever cheerful, and purposely upbeat when the disease returned, she joked, “The interesting thing about cancer is, there’s never a dull moment!” She refused chemotherapy declaring, “I’d rather die looking good and having my wits about me.” Elaine de Kooning passed away in February of 1989. She was seventy.

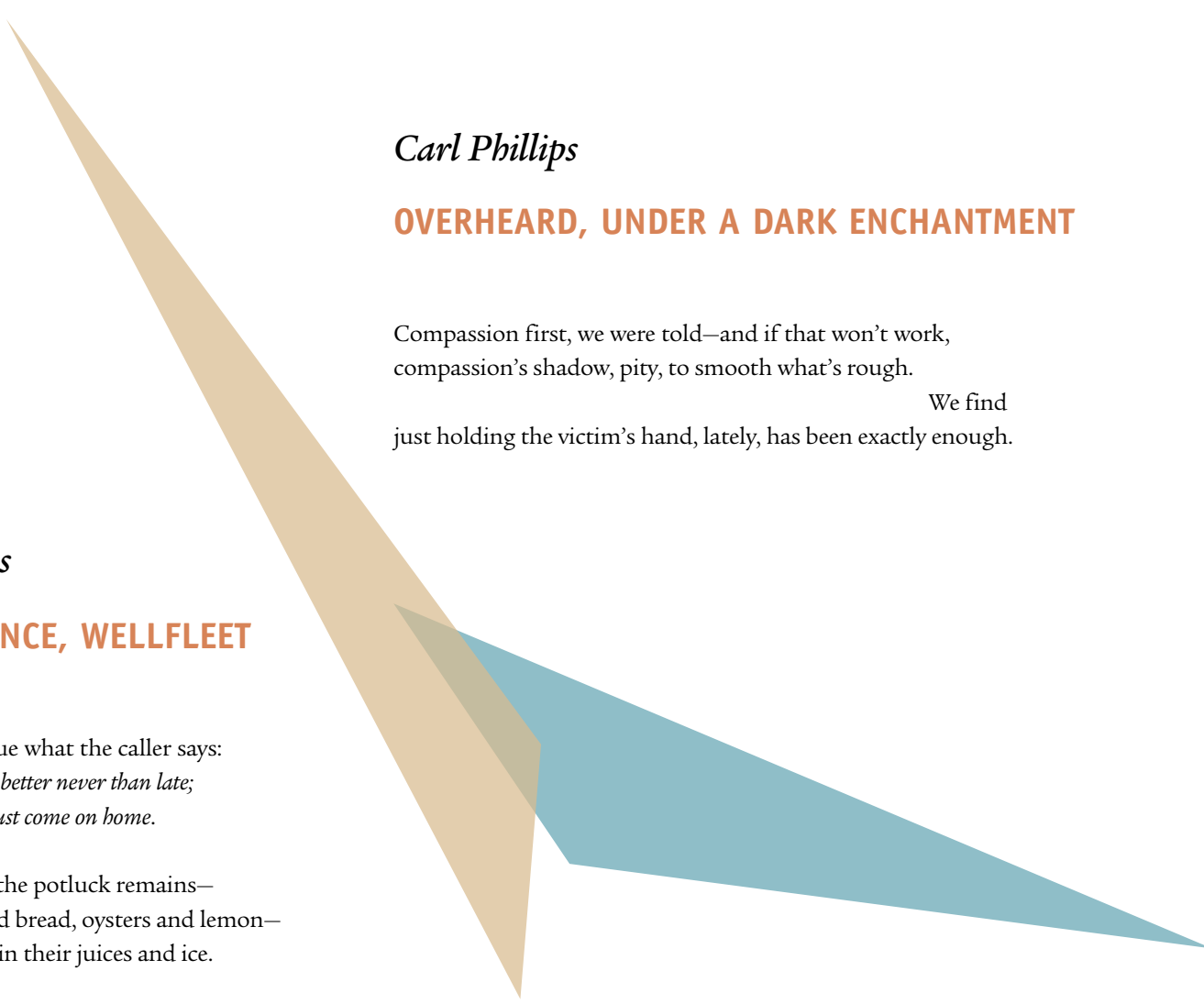
In this exquisitely detailed biography, author Cathy Curtis has brought the artist back to life, along with a transformative period in American art. Through an examination of de Kooning’s life and work, Curtis deftly translates historical events for a new generation, and her comprehensive endnotes give context to the era and its cultural nuances, such as Automats and 1960s methadone clinics. Throughout, Cathy Curtis’s admiration for her subject infuses her work. In a telephone interview, Curtis told me she was “honored to be in the company of this delightful, witty, and kind person.” Thanks to *A Generous Vision*, so was I. 📖

DENISE DOHERTY PAPPAS is a summer resident of Provincetown and former Mather Center seminarian. Her biography John Simmons: The Measure of a Man describes the radical-thinking, nineteenth-century clothing manufacturer-philanthropist who endowed Simmons College in Boston.

FOREWORD BY KELLE GROOM

I FIRST HEARD Sam Ross's poem "Last Dance, Wellfleet" just after the last presidential election, while Sam was in residence at the Fine Arts Work Center. In the Stanley Kunitz Common Room, he gave the first reading of the winter Fellows. In the wake of the election, many of us were (and continue to be) stunned. The overwhelming question, "What do we do now?"

After Sam Ross's reading, I felt, *this is what we do*. I felt this while I read Carl Phillips's poem on compassion, "Overheard, Under a Dark Enchantment," and Nick Flynn's poem, "Icarus," for Alton Sterling, who was killed by the police on the 240th anniversary of the founding of the United States. I felt it reading poems of radical love by Sarah Messer, "A Prayer Before Meeting," and Edil Hassan, "Origin Story as 'Ashwaq.'" In "Dream House," Matthew Olzmann's hilarious, clear-eyed understanding of desire, and in "Singularity," Teresa Leo's poem that makes enough room to stand in grief. In "Design for a Vault," Fred Marchant's evocation of Walt Whitman drawing his funeral vault in blue pencil, *luckier, / lovelier than anyone supposed*. In Sophia Starmack's attention to the grass in "Phragmites." In Aimee Noel's devotion in "Understanding Gear Ratios." In "The Girl With No Hands," Kasey Jueds's fairy tale of hunger becoming *that leafy other*, and in Traci Brimhall's "Chthonic Lullaby," *darling potential, possibility all radical, radiant*. And in the reckless leap of Anna Ross's "At Collinsville Bridge," unfastening ourselves to fly. These thrilling, beautiful poems show me how to live in this world.



Carl Phillips

OVERHEARD, UNDER A DARK ENCHANTMENT

Compassion first, we were told—and if that won't work,
compassion's shadow, pity, to smooth what's rough.

We find
just holding the victim's hand, lately, has been exactly enough.

Sam Ross

LAST DANCE, WELFLEET

Maybe it's true what the caller says:
*Sometimes it's better never than late;
if you're lost, just come on home.*

Downstairs, the potluck remains—
meatballs and bread, oysters and lemon—
sit for hours in their juices and ice.

Children in their games ignore
the stomping blur above them.
Left-hand star, right-hand star.

The woman who began by crying, flustered,
ends exuberant, whoops and yips
when the fiddle leaves room.

Yes, you'll all be fine! assures the caller.
Yes, all of us: picture framer, librarian,
Chuck in his smock and dance flats

and the woman who cried.
I tell Sophia *At least we'll see
each other wherever they ship the queers*

when we pair off at the end. Even now
when every night leading to winter
looks the same, darker,

it could look like this: a waltz
in a hall named Preservation.
Thank your partner. Thank the band.

Sarah Messer

A PRAYER BEFORE MEETING

Unknown Love, every billboard along the highway
blinks like the great cornea of your eye.

Unknown Love, you are still invisible to me, and the sand hill crane
in the cornfield is a grey needle working some wound.

I read Lorca to the violets tucked behind the garden's ear.
Unknown Love, I am thinking of you without shape.

There you are in the storefronts' dusty eyebrows.
Unknown Love, how will I know when we have met?

When will the sky become the shape of your vast antlers?
Now nothing can be said about the snap of sailcloth, the mouth of a well.

Unknown Love, were you the King of Dragonflies who stitched
the pond's surface closed this morning?

I pray that any minute you will reveal yourself to me. But just now
a Bic lighter in my pocket burned all these notes about you.

Nick Flynn

ICARUS

—for Alton Sterling

Icarus, my fallen & risen
son, remember—

night is not

toothless, not a little bird
that sings pretty

for baby, not a bird

that whispers *cry cry*—it's a
bog, invisible

& loud & everywhere
at once.

You can number the days
the sun

won't consent to appear
& the days

you can't know what
to feel. My burning

coal, a dandelion
falling out of your mouth,

how do you get your flowers
to grow

in such poor soil?

Down below, a man
pounds a pole into a field,

into a hole already dug,

a hole just wide enough
to slip a tongue into—

what I wanted
I didn't ask for, what I needed

I couldn't take . . . His eyes
now closing, his ear

pressed to the earth, forgetting
the threat

falling from above.

Midnight
birdsong, a ladder unfurling

the sky . . . how many

will die before their bodies begin
to burn in the night

& how many will you then fit onto
the big wheel? If this

were the ocean our boat
would be sinking, falling apart like

sugar in our tea

but this is nowhere near
the ocean.

The marks on his body spell

something—*now rupture? how*
rapture?—a sentence

we will spend the rest of our lives

translating. It's either: *I am more*
alive than the absence of light, or,

I feel that itch, the need to break
free.

Sometimes
you pass a pile of feathers in a field

& instinctively
look up to the sky. We keep

treading water, even though

the ledge is *right there*, right at
our fingertips.

Notes:

Alton Sterling was killed by the police in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, July 2016, on the 240th anniversary of the founding of the United States.

"Icarus" is a cento composed of lines gathered from Melanie Brkich, Lani Yu, Luisa Muradyan, Andrea Syzdek, Rhianna Brandt, and Nathan Stabenfeldt—transformed by Nick Flynn.

Sophia Starmack

PHRAGMITES

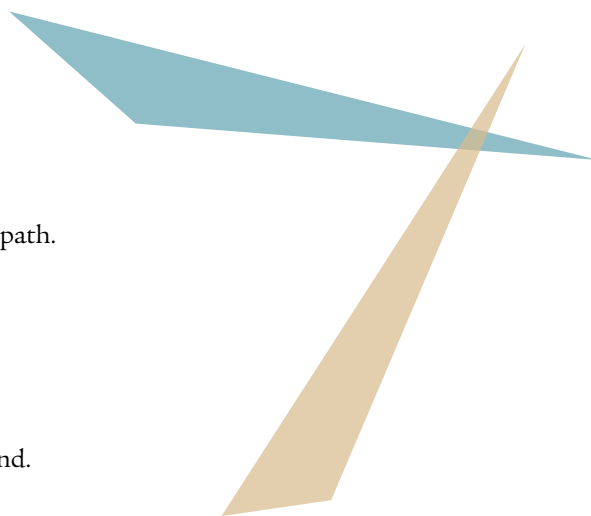
I climb out to the ravaged pier and lay back like Isaac.
Crosshatched as by some logical blade, the phragmites blow down along the path.

An arrow of geese whittles the sky, but there is no wound.
Black snails coruscate ahead of the tide, outpace the upturned crabs.

Beyond the pilings and the gray bay rising fast, the reeds sibilate, brothers
sunk in the same rotting root. A ship? Or was it a gull? All I can see and beyond.

You are so prideful tonight, Beloved. The pellucid eye of menhaden,
broken and beached. In all this walking with death I forgot about you.

A sort of progress marked by sulphur and salt. The first winter wind,
so late this year. The dry stalks claim no kin, only lift and shed their seed.



Anna V. Q. Ross

AT COLLINSVILLE BRIDGE

We knew the bridge before we knew it:
rust X of girders a diagram of long gone
warehouse and railroad. Knew if we could master
the 60-foot wingspan of its drop
into the lap of water loose against bank,
we would know something better.

Aim for my wake, you said—a bulls-eye pupil
dilating. We were not our mothers, yet,
and so could hold the story of that boy who jumped
too late last August and found the rapids
only a thin cloth on a rocky table that broke
his fall as proof of luck—not his,
but ours to straddle along with the iron rail
before we unfastened ourselves to fly.

Matthew Olzmann

DREAM HOUSE

On the reality TV show, a couple searches
for one of those tiny houses. You know the type.
Mousetrap small. Maybe 300 square feet.
But they insist on a full kitchen, a king size bed,
a patio, a separate dining area, and a living room
suitable for entertaining. Exasperated,
the contractor looks as if he's been asked to build
the Parthenon or a blue whale. The job's already
impossible, and still the couple continues.
Additionally, they'd like to request a Jacuzzi,
a private study, a pool table and a storage room.
Why stop there? Rarely is desire rational. Equally
likely to require a walk-in closet, an aquarium
with live sharks, or an active volcano, it wants
what it wants and all it wants
is for us to live, happily, inside it.
Its floor plan, increasingly complicated.
Its rooms, too numerous to name.

Teresa Leo

SINGULARITY

In my end is my beginning.

—T. S. Eliot

New Year's Eve
played out like a star

that collapses beyond a certain point
when a black hole is formed,

and inside the black hole
a singularity, all matter binding,

moving from finite to infinite,
a new thing born—

while the rest of the world was out
at parties, I was at home,

neither celebrating
nor lamenting, alone,

except for the two million people
in my living room,

watching the giant silver orb
descend and delete time,

the ball like a star
about to explode, go supernova,

and at the precise moment
the year turned over, the word *alone*—

an event horizon around a black hole
that marks the point of no return—

amassed then buckled,
the way a body falls inward

when crushed by its own gravity,
and a new singularity

emerged—*alone*—only now
on the other side of the new year

with people on TV cheering,
kissing, as if stellar remnants

had blasted off to Times Square
and the crowd was a nebula, an anomaly,

particles in space colliding,
bright as their neon sunglasses

that blinked the date
and let me know it was time.

This is the kind of moment
when a person decides

she must go somewhere
where heartbreak is not static

and the word *alone*
does not translate

or cross oceans, fields,
but rather, is absorbed

into the dark sky
like a void left by a star

light-years away
from a crowded square at midnight,

making just enough room
to stand alone and be in it.

ORIGIN STORY AS 'ASHWAQ

The word for lover is 'ashwaq and I look for him in the voice of the wheat skinned Imam, whose breath whistles like air through the Prophet's gapped teeth. It is Aisha, three weeks in love with this ghost of a man, who thinks he lives somewhere in the masjid. By the shoe rack, she says. The one stall washroom in which wudhu is another way we drown. I have yet to see him, this discreet lover, and still never have I dreamt him myth but a fellow worshipper who hears dhuhur adhan and spills against his musallah shadow beneath Hajar's feet. For him, I do not pray, I dream; I dream as I always do, that I wear white for days and no one has died and even if the world is gone with my people there is still a return waiting for all of us. In Venice a man is struck down three steps after declaring his love and I dream it was not flesh the bullet hit but clay still straining with Adam's first breath. A girl who for love holds her thirst until sun down is attacked by five men at a train station and I dream that maghrib is the waning light from which we were first born. On Friday the khutbah is a hush. The rain outside is the sound of old knees bowing down in sujood. On this day made doubly holy, Aisha finds him through the parting of the curtain that divides the men from the women. In the light passing through, shivering silver and wet like all godly things do. And still I cannot see him, but I know that if my prostration is what colors the skies dawn, then his skin is dark like the stain on polyester. Neck the curve of dangling thread. For him I dream our joining is like prostration too and if there is dawn then I out of love am tired of its smoke and if I say bismillah then by love it is a beginning but not of elegy, and if there is no more rain, if a hand closes the parting, is no longer some holy site nor the spring I have wandered to in pilgrimage, if we all say amen so that dawn and dew and day may return again, then for love I hold my tongue instead.

Kasey Jueds

THE GIRL WITH NO HANDS

eats the pear with only
her mouth, steps close

to the brimming tree & takes
the fruit with lips & teeth,

her maimed arms tied
behind her back. Later

in the story she will
marry, later still be parted

from her love. But now
she steps toward the tree as if

to enter it, as if the tree
were gate or door or

her own unharmed body
somehow kept whole. I know

there is a story inside
this story, one I cannot

read. A story inside the tree
the girl presses her entire

handless body into,
as if she might become

that leafy other. First time
you stepped your body

into mine: crickets, streetlights,
the nocturnal city

breathing. Before then, before
I knew you, I touched you with

the girl's lost hands, the gone-hands
hidden inside my own. Before

the pear, the tree, the girl
walked & walked, she slept

in a thicket from which she
crept at dawn. For so

long, the story was
about hunger, as maybe

most stories are. I press
the side of my face against

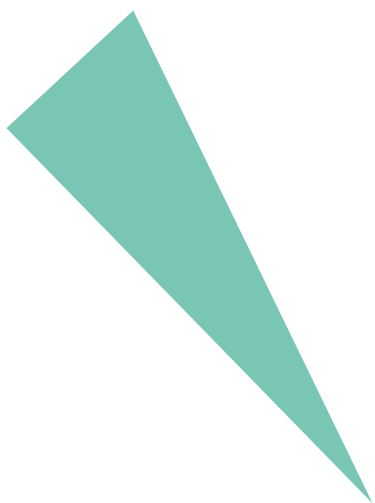
the space between
your shoulder blades. Did I say

at the end the girl's hands
grow back? Did I tell you

it is summer?—& the girl
is ravenous, & the tree

is green as never, or always.

—based on a story by the Brothers Grimm



Traci Brimhall

CHTHONIC LULLABY

Hush, hush, sweet godling stirring underground.
Rush, rush, little sprite unfurling and unbound,
an inch of hair fuzzing your head. Undreamt of,

your hunger hurts you awake. The sin is not
the wanting, it's the wanting more. Stars, perhaps,

unburnt in your pocket, innocent of any sensual crime,

charmed by rhyme to remember you in whichever
sea you swell. Swim, swim for the shore. Steer

by the bells. Sing, sing, for the nightingales refuse
to be governed. I sinned with conviction and dug
the grave for it with my bare hands. What saved me

was secular and let me paint it naked. Lullay, little
episteme, darling potential, possibility all radical, radiant.

Quick, quick, dreamling, unclench your fist and churn.

Sound waves turn sibilant, showing a future that might
be ours. And in the messianic tomorrow, a white horse.

And in the dialectic, pleasure and pain. And in the child,
a white shadow I praise until my sadness is paling
and perfect and tries to nurse from my fingers.

Aimee Noel

UNDERSTANDING GEAR RATIOS

Because everything my father valued was shiny, I tried
to wrap myself in chrome or fire myself crucible-hot

and pour slag from my throat until he believed I was
tempered steel and a son. Evenings, I snapped tools

into his open palm like a surgical assistant
while he resuscitated junkyard cars. Nighttime

lullabies of socket sizes and spark plug gaps
seeped from my brain like spent oil into a drip pan.

Fractions and meters and gear ratios would not remain
in my brain of words: 2:1 spinning in the opposite direction.



Fred Marchant

DESIGN FOR A VAULT

Walt Whitman, Harleigh Cemetery, Camden

New snow taking its time,
lines graceful as the filigree
lists in his long poem, the slow,
gathering drifts of adjectives,
the nouns that touched down
all around him, the handful
of piercing unequivocal verbs,
the chilling truth that you became
what you beheld, all this as he
sketched with a blue pencil his
grave's post and lintel entry.
He notes it should be made from
massive Quincy granites, grey
and "undressed," and set into
a sloping wooded hill and with
everything around it "crude and
material." He wrote his name
large above the door, the two
W's like great-winged herons
lifting off, and these he thought
were perhaps like his poems,
or like snow landing on his hands
whispering yes, it was luckier,
lovelier than anyone supposed.



KELLE GROOM is the author of a memoir, *I Wore the Ocean in the Shape of a Girl* (Simon & Schuster), and four poetry collections: *Spill*, *Five Kingdoms*, *Luckily* (Anhinga Press); and *Underwater City* (University Press of Florida). Her work has appeared in *AGNI*, the *American Poetry Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry*, the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, and *The Best American Poetry*. Her awards include a National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship. She is on the faculty of the low-residency MFA Program at Sierra Nevada College, Lake Tahoe, and is Director of the Summer Workshops at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown.

TRACI BRIMHALL is the author of *Saudade* (Copper Canyon Press, 2017), *Our Lady of the Ruins* (W. W. Norton, 2012), and *Rookery* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2010). Her poems have appeared in the *New Yorker*, *Slate*, *Poetry*, the *Believer*, the *New Republic*, and *The Best American Poetry*.

NICK FLYNN is the author of four books of poetry and three memoirs. His most recent poetry collection is *My Feelings* (Graywolf Press, 2015). Graywolf will publish his new poetry collection, *I Will Destroy You*, in 2019.

EDIL HASSAN is a Somali-American poet. She is interested in how poetry can give voice to stories lost by time, generation, and water.

KASEY JUEDS's first book of poems, *Keeper*, won the 2012 Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize from the University of Pittsburgh Press. Her recent poems have appeared or are forthcoming in the *American Poetry Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Salamander*, and *Crazyhorse*.

TERESA LEO is the author of two books of poetry, *Bloom in Reverse* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014) and *The Halo Rule* (2008), winner of the Elixir Press Editor's Prize. She is the recipient of a Pew Center fellowship, a Leeway Foundation grant, two Pennsylvania Council on the Arts fellowships, and the Richard Peterson Poetry Prize from *Crab Orchard Review*.

FRED MARCHANT is the author of five books of poetry, the most recent of which is *Said Not Said* (Graywolf Press, 2017). Earlier books include *The Looking House*, *Full Moon Boat*, and *House on Water*, *House*

in Air. His first book, *Tipping Point*, won the 1993 Washington Prize. Marchant has translated works by several Vietnamese poets and edited *Another World Instead: The Early Poems of William Stafford, 1937–1947*. He is founding director of the Suffolk University Poetry Center.

SARAH MESSER's most recent books are *Dress Made of Mice* (Black Lawrence Press, 2015) and *Having Once Paused: Poems of Zen Master Ikkyū* (translated with Kidder Smith, University of Michigan Press, 2015). She teaches Creative Writing in the Residential College at the University of Michigan and is a cheese-maker at White Lotus Farms.

AIMEE NOEL writes from Dayton, Ohio, where she works as an educator and activist. Her essays and poems have been featured on NPR affiliates and published in *Great Lakes Review*, *Forklift, Ohio*, *Slippery Elm*; the *Nuclear Impact* poetry anthology; and elsewhere. She was the Ohio Arts Council's Summer Fellow at Provincetown's Fine Arts Work Center in 2016.

MATTHEW OLZMANN is the author of two collections of poems, *Mezzanines* (2013), which was selected for the Kundiman Poetry Prize, and *Contradictions in the Design* (2016), both from Alice James Books. His writing has appeared in *The Best American Poetry*, *Kenyon Review*, *New England Review*, *Brevity*, and elsewhere. He teaches at Dartmouth College and also in the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College.

CARL PHILLIPS's most recent book of poems is *Wild Is the Wind* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018). He teaches at Washington University in St. Louis.

ANNA V. Q. ROSS is the author of the poetry collections *If a Storm* (Anhinga Press, 2013) and *Figuring* (Bull City Press, 2016). Her work has appeared in *AGNI*, *Barrow Street*, *Harvard Review*, the *Paris Review*, and the *Southern Review*. She is a Massachusetts Cultural Council fellowship recipient and teaches at Emerson College.

SAM ROSS's first book, *Company*, was selected by Carl Phillips for the Levis Prize in Poetry and is forthcoming in 2019 from Four Way Books.

SOPHIA STARMACK is the Writing Coordinator at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown. Her poetry chapbook, *The Wild Rabbit*, was published by Deadly Chaps Press in 2015.

Smuggler's Blues **KINGPIN** **MARCUS STRATTON**

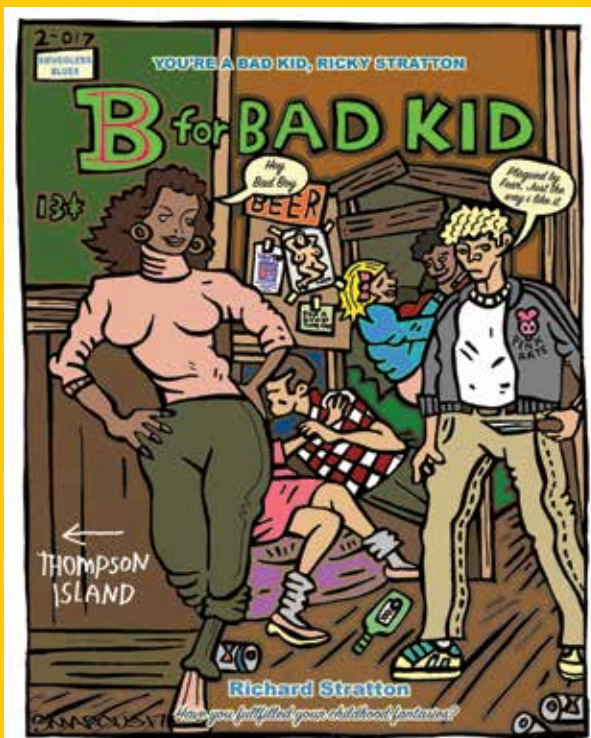
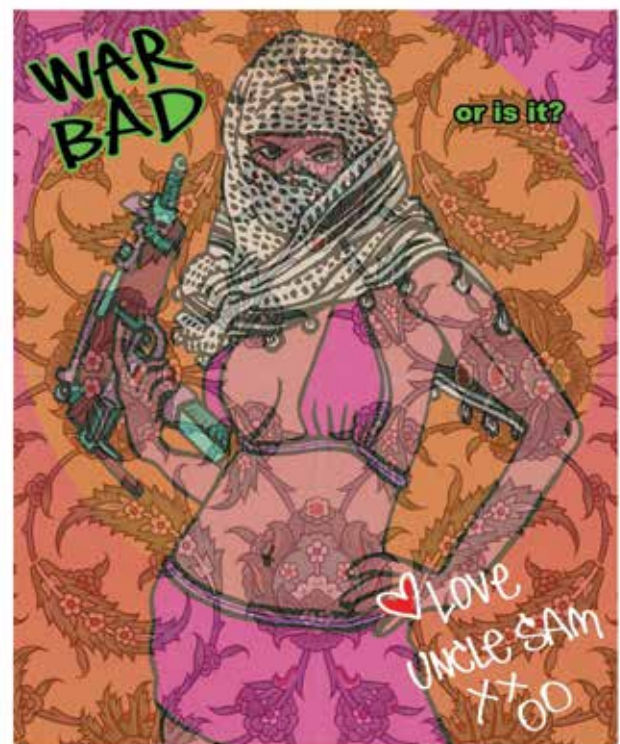
Excerpts from RICHARD STRATTON's *Smuggler's Blues* and *Kingpin*
Illustrations by STEVE MARCUS

WAR BAD

Such is the curious confluence of the Drug War and wars of insurgence. Money from illegal drugs funds the purchase of weapons. America buys the drugs; America manufactures and sells the arms. The Captain is a walking embodiment of this paradox: an officer in the United States armed forces ostensibly seeking to promote peace in the world in the service of a nation dedicated to eradicating the production and distribution of illegal drugs. Yet he acts as a go-between for American matériel destined to and paid for by warlords who make their money in the illegal drug trade. And he does it all with Uncle Sam's sanction and blessing.

"War bad," Mohammed says. His jowls wag as he shakes his head. "Beirut, no good," he remarks with sadness, seeing how I am fixated on the destruction of this once magnificent city. The irony, however, is that for our particular business war is good. There is virtually no law enforcement in Lebanon, no central government with authority, and no unified military forces capable of keeping order. No DEA, no FBI, and certainly no IRS.

—SMUGGLER'S BLUES



BAD KID

To say I'm high and nervous doesn't come close to describing how I feel. I'm plagued by fear. Terrified. Freaked-the-fuck-out. Just the way I like it.

Not simply fear of arrest, though that is always with me. Not fear of failure, either. No, it is a deep-seated dread that everything they have always said about me is true: *You're a bad kid, Rickie Stratton. A troublemaker. A juvenile delinquent. You may even be a sociopath. And that shit you smoke, that music you listen to, is only going to make you worse.* They being the Authorities: adults, teachers, principals, probation officers, cops, judges, and shrinks. Lawyers. My big fear is that I am proving them right. I am a failure at everything except crime. The only way I know to soothe this runaway fear is to keep assuring myself *they* are wrong and what I am doing is right.

—SMUGGLER'S BLUES

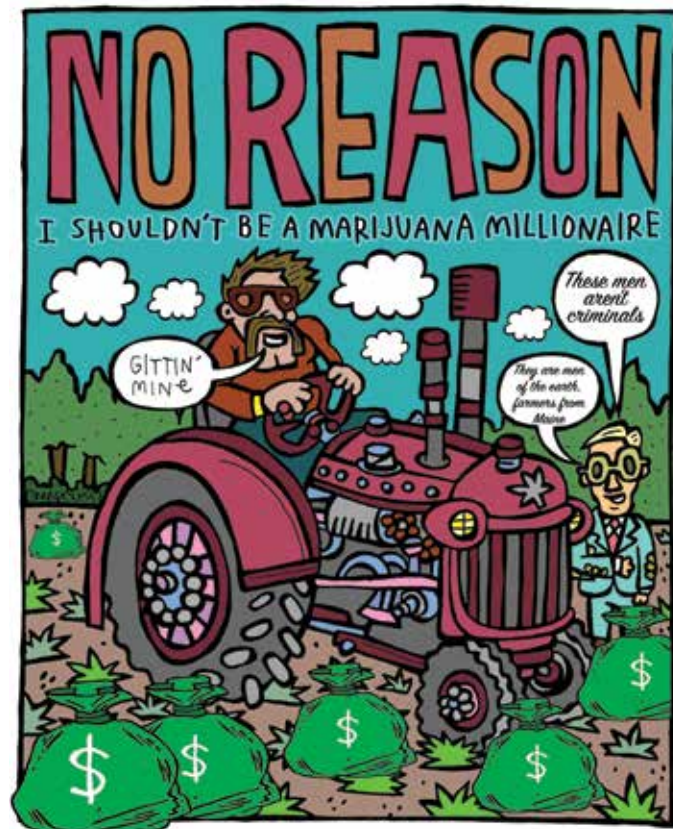
MARIJUANA MILLIONAIRE

As Nasif translates, I see Mohammed starting to turn purple with rage. Did he think I wouldn't check the load? That I would just let it go and trust in Allah to get it past Customs? "But Mr. Richard, that will take days. Maybe more than one week," Nasif protests. "We'll miss the ship. It could be weeks before we can arrange new transport. And the war—"

"You tell your father I'm sick of this shit! It doesn't matter how long it takes. I told you how I wanted the cartons packed. You—he—ignored my instructions! We can't send it like this!" I'm yelling now. The dudes with the Uzis are getting tense. "It's got to be done right," I say, "or I'll take every one of these fucking boxes and throw them into the sea!"

There is a lengthy discussion in Arabic between father, son, and one of the men guarding the warehouse. They give me a look that says, *Forget about it, pal. The shipment's going the way it is.* As the former chief of Lebanese Customs, Mohammed just can't understand that, unlike in Beirut, US Customs is not totally corrupt. To break the impasse and let them know I'm serious, I grab one of the cartons I opened, take it out onto the dock, and heave it into the murky Mediterranean. "Every fucking one!" I yell and head back inside. "I'll go back with nothing. I don't give a fuck. *I don't want to go to prison.* Can't you understand that?"

Finally, Mohammed relents. The men fish the box of hash from the sea and laugh at me. Crazy American! I feel my grandmother's spirit swelling with pride. He may be a dope smuggler, but at least he's a conscientious dope smuggler. After all, hadn't some of our forebears made their fortune smuggling opium and God knows what else? It is a Yankee outlaw tradition to thumb one's nose at the government and break the laws that are perceived as wrongheaded. Henry David Thoreau taught me that in his essay "Civil Disobedience." Governments and their picayune laws are for the uninformed masses, the sheep. Every great fortune is founded on a crime, Balzac said. As a native New Englander, I was brought up with the rumors that Joe Kennedy made his family's fortune smuggling booze during Prohibition—and his son went on to become president. The laws against cannabis are a cruel joke. It is only a matter of time before pot prohibition is repealed. In the interim, fortunes will be made. I paid my dues. No reason I should not be a marijuana millionaire. —SMUGGLER'S BLUES



JULY 4TH IN JAIL

At night before lockdown I stand in the common area and look out through the steel-barred windows at the city of New York—so close, so real, so enticing, and yet a reality away. Gazing from my cell on the Fourth of July, I watch the fireworks over the East River. America is out there celebrating its independence while I am locked up. Life goes on out there; in here we exist in a state of suspended animation. Out there, millions and millions of people come and go in freedom. Yet they are subject to the constraints of work-a-day lives: having to pay rent or make mortgage and car payments; having to buy food and clothes; having to hold a job, keep appointments, and keep up appearances. Here we are *in custody*. I don't have to do shit. I pay for nothing except my mistakes, and pay for them with an abstraction—time—and a feeling—guilt. I try to wrap my head around the whole idea of what it means to be a convicted criminal and a kept human being serving time—as if time were something tangible that could be cooked and served and consumed like a meal.

I'm subject to the constant control and scrutiny of my keepers, yet there is a subtle perversity to being in custody. If they tell me to do something and I refuse, what can they do? Lock me up? I'm already in jail, so it's liberating. I remind myself almost hourly that the one thing they cannot control is my mind, including my mental attitude. For the first time in my life, I may be totally free, free from the precepts of society, already a convicted deviant and facing more charges. I am never bored. Beside the constant action on the unit—the coming and going of the most intriguing crooks and gangsters—I am fascinated by what is going on inside my head.

I think of the man I was when I was free: obsessed with risk, an ingrate who did not appreciate or use wisely my freedom and the vast amounts of money I made. A profligate. An unfaithful husband. A seeker after cheap thrills. Let me pay now with my time for my mistakes. Let the pain of loneliness compensate for some measure of the karmic debt I owe for the pain I caused others. Let this isolation sustain me as I come to grips with who I was and grow into a different, better person. Out there, the game was a constant distraction. I thrived on the action. All that exists in here, too. But there is a time when the cell door closes and is locked and the unit goes quiet, and I must accept that I cannot run away from my better self. I cannot drink or smoke myself to sleep. I must face the reality of how and why I fucked up my life and abused my freedom, and I must come up with a plan to win it back. —KINGPIN



ANONYMOUS ME

Oh, anonymous me. I get the best rest when no one knows where I am. And no place is too shabby for me to hang my hat. I like a Red Roof Inn or a Super 8 when I'm in the middle of a trip. The lower budget the motel, the better. Park the car around back away from the main road. Check in under an alias and blend in with the rest of the traveling salesmen. The room smells of disinfectant, damp, cheap carpet, and plastic wall covering. The windows don't open. I make no calls from the room. I've got a sack full of quarters for the pay phone, a paperback book about Meyer Lansky, some personal stash, and an overnight bag. Nothing to connect me to any of the frantic importation and distribution of enough weed to satisfy North America's enormous demand for a few days except a few scraps of paper with my coded phone numbers and financial records.

I delude myself that this is how I prefer to live—solo. There is no one checking up on me, no one to answer to except myself. —SMUGGLER'S BLUES

MAGIC CHRISTMAS CARD

And there are other diversions to break the monotony of prison life. Last Christmas, Val, my former lover, sent me a Christmas card. I called her, collect, from one of the pay phones in the unit a few days after I received her card, to wish her a merry Christmas.

"Did you get my card?" she asked.

"Yeah, thanks."

"How did you like it?"

"I liked it. Merry Christmas to you, too."

"No," she said, "I don't think you really liked my card. You should go back and look at it again. You might discover you like it more."

I did. Turned out the Santa in the card was made up of sixty-seven tabs of pure West Coast Brotherhood of Eternal Love Hippie Mafia approved blotter acid. For weeks after that I played tennis on LSD. The guards looked at us with curiosity and envy as we trooped in from the rec yard for the 4:00 p.m. count, tennis rackets tucked under our arms, drenched in sweat in our shorts and sneakers after yet another grueling day on the courts, and they wondered: *Why are these guys having so much fun?* —KINGPIN



STEVE MARCUS (aka smarcus) has received honors and awards from the American Society of Illustrators, and has several works in the permanent collection of the Oakland Museum of California and in private art collections in the United States and abroad. He has collaborated with Allen Ginsberg, Ken Kesey, Timothy Leary, the Miguel Piñero Estate, the Norman Mailer Estate, and the Red Hot Chili Peppers. He's created artwork and illustrations for High Times magazine and the infamous Cannabis Cup, the United Nations, MTV, XXL magazine, the Tibetan Freedom concerts, the Source, Condé Nast publications, and Esquire, and posters for the world-famous Fillmore in San Francisco. Marcus has an upcoming solo exhibition at the Jewish Museum of Florida in Miami Beach in Spring of 2019. Contact the artist at smarcus@smarcus.com.

RICHARD STRATTON is a writer and filmmaker. Smuggler's Blues and Kingpin are the first two volumes of a trilogy, Remembrance of the War on Plants. Book three, In the World: From the Big House to Hollywood, will be published by Arcade in 2018. He directed and produced the four-hour documentary series Gotti: Fathers and Sons on A&E. He lives in New York City.

Excerpts from Smuggler's Blues: A True Story of the Hippie Mafia by Richard Stratton, published by Arcade Publishing, New York © 2016 by Richard Stratton; and Kingpin: Prisoner of the War on Drugs by Richard Stratton, published by Arcade Publishing, New York © 2017 by Richard Stratton.

Discovering Varla Jean

AN INTERVIEW WITH
JEFFERY ROBERSON

By Martin Kessler

I FELL IN LOVE with Varla Jean Merman on a summer night in P-town in 2000. I was a drag show virgin (although I do remember having my children serenaded by Musty Chiffon with the theme from *Flipper* at the Mews Restaurant in '89), and it was a particularly delightful way to lose that form of innocence. I can even identify the exact moment when I became smitten. At the top of an impressive display of vocal pyrotechnics, Varla Jean squirted a can of Cheez Whiz into her mouth.

Unlike some of the female impersonators I had seen, with their cigarette-baritone voices and clumsily applied layers of pancake, Varla was a sort of haywire Southern belle—impeccably coiffed, immaculately made-up, and unquestionably wholesome. Sure, she was 6 foot 3 inches with the body of a linebacker and, sure, there were the requisitely raunchy double entendres, but, mostly, the act was hysterically funny and quite sweet.

And boy, could that girl sing. As a choral director and former professional vocalist, I was filled with admiration for the particular magic trick that I was listening to. The male voice has at least three modalities, all related to the control of the vocal cords and their attached muscles and ligaments. These are more or less familiar to the general public as chest voice, the robust “natural” timbre; head voice, the lighter, airier version of the normal range; and falsetto, the sometimes powerful, sometimes spooky flip into the normally female range, an octave higher than the male tessitura. Varla Jean had managed to feminize all three into a seamlessly convincing, goofily pleasing vocal production.

Since I have no head voice to speak of and a falsetto that is limited to talking like Mickey Mouse, I wanted to learn more. So, I asked Jeffery Roberson if he would take me beneath the bouffant, which led to an animated series of conversations about the VJ vocal phenomenon as he toured the Pacific Northwest last winter.

MARTIN KESSLER: So, you must have a musical background to be able to handle such a wide range of projects. How did it all start?



Varla Jean Merman in *A Little White Music*

PHOTO BY JOHN BARROIS

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Jeffery Roberson

JEFFERY ROBerson: Kind of by accident. I was admitted to a state-supported magnet school in Louisiana that emphasized art and science. I was accepted as a chemistry major, of all things, but I also played reeds. I ended up being the only marching oboe player in the world! Anyhow, a teacher heard me in the corridor and asked if I

was a tenor. I'd always wanted to sing, but was clueless about ranges. I ended up in her choir and, from that, I won a vocal scholarship to LSU.

MK: Was that a traditional voice major with classical pedagogy, or were you in a musical theater concentration?

JR: Totally classical. I started with the Schirmer book of Italian songs and arias, but my real love was opera. I got a job working in the music library and, since nobody came in, I spent hours just watching opera. I fell in love with Joan Sutherland—in fact, I've been told I look like her.

MK: You're much better looking.

JR: It's true her jawline is squarer than mine. But actually, it was Teresa Stratas whose work really attracted me. I was a big Kurt Weill fan and his music was a specialty of hers. I was already doing some drag

performing and, somehow, Varla Jean was born out of that gumbo.

MK: So, tell me about Varla Jean's voice.

JR: I really have four registers—the natural tenor, which I soften to feminize the sound; the passagio, which is my favorite range (a mixed production, where the muscles controlling the vocal cords are not fully engaged); then falsetto, which is where the money is; and then the whistle tone.

MK: What is whistle tone?

JR: It's sort of a gimmick. You are sucking air in through the cords. That way, I can produce pitches above the Queen of the Night's high F.

MK: Didn't you sing her *Magic Flute* aria on a YouTube video?

JR: It's actually a pastiche where I do the Queen's high coloratura while playing the flute part on my cell phone. It was a little scary. You can harm your voice doing whistle tone, so I wouldn't recommend that anyone try it.

MK: Speaking of danger, did the Cheez Whiz trick ever go wrong? I can't imagine squirting something into my mouth on a high note.

JR: You know I did that gag, no pun intended, for years. I used to be very heavy—over three hundred pounds—and I did a routine where I sang "Dream a little dream of cheese" (instead of "of me") and ate a block of Velveeta as I sang. Well, Velveeta was pretty expensive then and I found these cans of spray cheese at half the price, so it started out as an economy measure. The first time I did it, I just improvised the shtick onstage. The only time it ever went wrong was also because I was being cheap. I went into the True Value hardware store in P-town and saw a display of Cheez Whiz on the shelf for a

THE PENNEY PATCH



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bargain price and I bought it all. Of course, I never tested the cans before a show and when I squirted the nozzle, out came this gelatinous, greenish-brown goo.

MK: But Varla Jean is not just a comedienne. You've done really wonderful "Classical Varla" evenings at the Unitarian Universalist Meeting House in Provincetown as AIDS benefits, and you also did the title character in Menotti's *The Medium*. Madame Flora is a very serious role in a very serious one-act opera. How did you adapt your wacky Varla Jean character and vocal color to something so dark?

JR: *The Medium* was the hardest thing I've ever done, starting with just learning the notes. Even though it's tonal, it is still a twentieth-century opera. And I was working with a cast of legitimate opera voices in the other parts, so I needed to shape my vocal production so that my sound didn't appear weird.

MK: I conducted *The Medium* in 1987 with Lyric Opera Cleveland, and we had a contralto who literally scared everybody with her performance—me included. I would describe that production as being like an Ingmar Bergman *Dracula* film. By contrast, I found your version to be sweeter, more lyrical, and with more pathos for your character. But even though she was being sung by a six-foot-three man, I never found your Madame Flora to be scary until the end when she shoots a young man, thinking she has "killed the ghost." Was that something you consciously thought about and dealt with?

JR: That's the inherent problem of falsetto. It's a naturally softer sound without a huge dynamic range, so it's hard to be powerfully dramatic. I had to make up for that by acting my ass off. There is one moment late in the show when the character sings "Get out" to the grieving couples at the séance, and I was never sure I would have the big high G's, so I just screamed the line.

MK: This may seem off-the-wall, but did you consider *not* billing yourself as VJ for *The Medium*? Maybe she needs a strictly operatic alter ego for serious roles.

JR: *The Medium*, starring Varla Jean Merman, is a little like, *Medea*, starring Carol Burnett, isn't it? The producers wanted it that way, but it was confusing for the audience and even for the critics who reviewed it. VJ is so associated with mad-cap comedy that it probably would have been better to use my own name.

MK: With that in mind, have you ever considered doing non-drag countertenor roles? It's a very rich repertoire.

JR: You know, the criterion for the countertenor sound is very particular. In a way, all countertenors sound alike. It's really a male sound—quite strong, almost strident, and with minimal vibrato. With my tone quality, I'm safer sticking to comedy (and saner, too).

MK: Have you ever lost your voice?

JR: I did once, and I know exactly how it happened. I was going for the high B in Jefferson Airplane's "White Rabbit." It was a very noisy club and I couldn't hear the accompaniment. I felt something go right away, and I had no voice for two weeks.

MK: Those finicky little muscles that control the vocal cords have a way of telling you when they've had enough. They're actually protecting you from further damage by shutting down.

JR: I got to know a wonderful soprano, Marisol Montalvo, when I did the "Classical Varla" evenings at the U-U. She's beautiful and crazy-talented, but, because of vocal fatigue from constantly rehearsing new roles, she got addicted to prednisone. She had to go to Adele's ENT doc to get herself to a place where she could sing again. I've written a show for her called *Mad Scenes*, which is all about how striving for the perfection of sound that we associate with great opera recordings can make you nuts.

MK: And she must sing some mad scenes.

JR: She does Thomas's Ophelia and Donizetti's Lucia in the show, but it's still a comic monologue. She even jokes about making sure she's in her passaggio when she vocalizes during sex.

MK: So what's next for Varla and Jeffery?

JR: We're going to do *Mad Scenes* again this summer at the Art House, and I'm writing a new version of *The Shining* about two queens who spend the winter in Provincetown. And, of course, I'm working on the new act for 2018. The great thing about P-town is that we all make each other better. There is so much drag talent and creativity that we push each other to top whatever we did last season.

MK: Your shows have always had unifying themes. *A Little White Music* parodied white people's listening tastes, and *Bad Heroine* was a satire on female role models. What are you thinking about for this season's concept? With all the flooding in P-town, maybe you should do "Stormy Weather."

JR: A water theme is actually something I'm considering. It's a very rich subject musically,

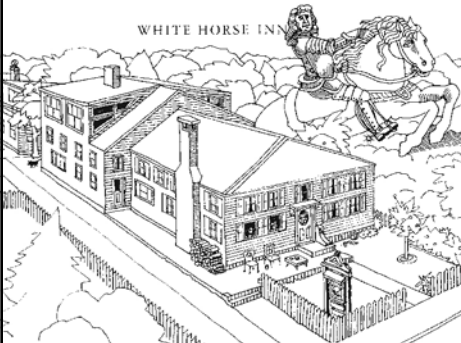
but "Stormy Daniels" might be a better fit for Varla Jean! ❖

MARTIN KESSLER is a Cleveland-based conductor, composer, music educator, and essayist. On May 16 of this year, he led the Suburban Symphony Orchestra and Choral Arts Cleveland in an All-Bernstein Centennial concert at the historic Maltz Performing Arts Center on the campus of Case Western Reserve University. Martin's family has owned a cottage in Provincetown for generations, and since 1985, he and his wife, Joyce, have summered there. They look forward to spending an entire year working on creative projects in the West End, hoping that it will resemble A Year in Provence more than *The Shining*.

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Elizabeth Streb

RISK MAKES REAL THE THRILL OF DANCE

By Christopher Busa



PHOTO BY TOM CARAVAGLIA

FOR CENTURIES, practitioners of ballet and dance have sought to defy gravity, the seeming weightlessness called *ballon*, when a dancer suspends the pinnacle of a leap, or a ballerina seems airborne, spinning in the air, lifted by her grounded partner. The Wright Brothers sought to make a machine heavier than air that could transport a flyer with the equilibrium and balance of riding a bicycle on the road. They tested shapes of wings in homemade wind tunnels and used their knowledge of bicycle mechanics to invent the three-axle control system, still used today in single-wing aircraft. Elizabeth Streb, who has spent parts of thirty summers in Truro, pays artful homage in her unique work to the fledgling efforts of the inventors of flight and the innovators of dance. Like the Wright Brothers, she fabricates machines that test human limits—and, like their ill-fated early flights, Streb's performers often fall to earth in the process of learning more. We see an example of this synergy in her performance piece called *Forces* (2013), in which, on and around the focus of a gymnastic horizontal bar, dancers leap, fall on mats, and collide in midair.

While watching rehearsals with Streb at the STREB Lab for Action Mechanics (SLAM) in Brooklyn one afternoon last November, I found myself alert as an animal, startled by repeated cracks of sound. Dancers were rehearsing elements of sequences they would need to perfect for performances; in one routine, pairs and groups of three slammed their bodies into a very solid wall. I learned that the wall was a thick sheet of solid steel, bolted in place, with the approximate dimensions of a double garage door. Somewhat forbidding, this hard-to-scale wall was sheathed with noise-amplifying plywood, painted black. Colliding hands and bare feet left white chalk markings that gave the appearance of some kind of instruction, like equations on a blackboard.

The groups of dancers ran toward the wall, marking the point of impact visibly and audibly. The pacing and rhythm of thuds accelerated, accompanied by the heavy breathing of the performers and punctuated at intervals with measured counting—"One! Two! Three! Four! Five! Go!" Without music to disguise the voice commands of the dancer who led the timing, the audience came to understand the sounds in a new way: the thumps and thuds resonated as drumbeats, the voice, as accompaniment.

An element of excitement is key in Elizabeth Streb's philosophy of dance. Her works evoke a visceral reaction, acting on the chemistry of the witness—the adrenaline that flows from the performers equally affects the viewers. With many movements in space coordinated by split-second timing, Streb's performances extend the physical limits of ballet and modern dance: her work confronts, decisively, the experience of real risk, and how the spectacle affects the spectator. In 1915, physiologist Walter Cannon coined the term "fight or flight" to describe an animal's response to a threat, its physiology and bodily reactions in the face of trauma. In 1932 he popularized the concept of "homeostasis" in his

book *The Wisdom of the Body*, discussing the human instinct to maintain a constant internal environment. Streb has used this understanding of physiology in creating her own work, engaging dancers and audience with layers and rhythms of these physical responses.

In fact, Streb, throughout her distinguished career, has examined with deepening profundity the body's biomechanics and its interaction with man-made machines. Here the homeostasis, or the balancing regulation of the body's involuntary functions, creates a fundamental drama between the mechanics of the human body and technology. Her method creates opportunities for us to discover, in a split second, the difference between thinking and being. Streb trains her performers to channel the fight-flight response into a heightened awareness of how to evade danger. She constructs obstacle courses, not to train soldiers for war, but to train artists to discover new powers within themselves.

After eighteen years of rising success, touring nationally and internationally, and running a dance studio in SoHo, Streb decided to rename her company and move to a larger, empty industrial building in Williamsburg, a former mustard factory. SLAM opened in 2002. The space is cavernous—ceilings are forty feet high—and the Lab fast became a busy community hub, offering classes in tumbling for tots and trapeze for teenagers. Workshops are open to people of all ages and skill levels and are taught by Streb's resident troupe of performers and dancers. Many have backgrounds in modern dance and ballet and gymnastics, and one has a background in the circus. When Streb holds auditions for new dancers, she looks for mesomorphs, those who are strong and limber, with beautiful articulation of their muscles: "A STREB action specialist . . . needs a constitutionally impervious physical body. There can be no inherent weakness in structure, joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles, mind, or heart."

*I think my original belief and desire is to see a human being fly. It's an age-old human quest—can we fly? And my first approach is, well, it's not going to be as birds fly. So how can a human fly? —Elizabeth Streb, *Born to Fly**

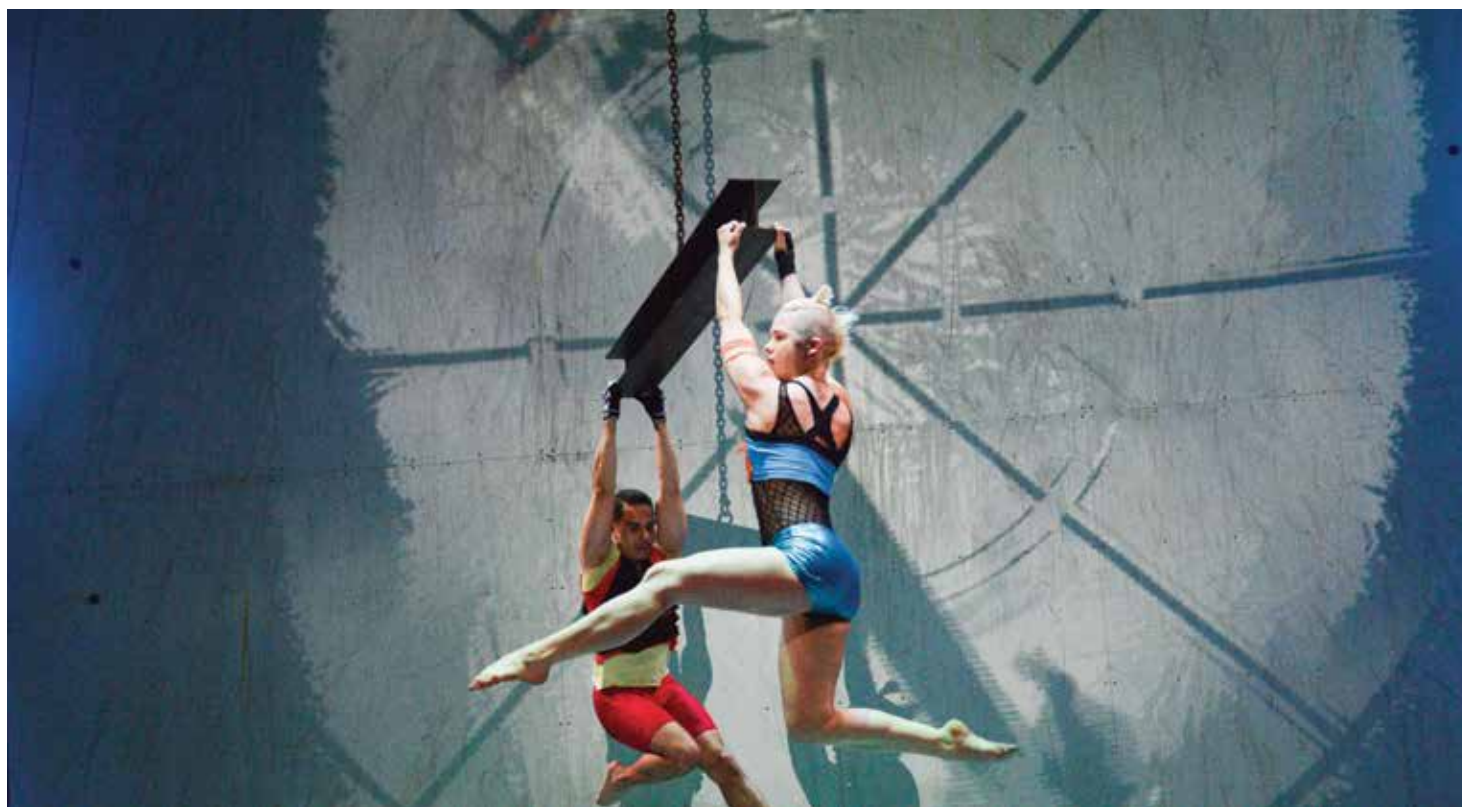


PHOTO BY STEPHEN SHOLL

(above) *Slice*, 2012 at SLAM (STREB Lab for Action Mechanics), part of *Forces*, with Jackie Carlson and Leonardo Giron Torres; (right) Diagram drawing by Elizabeth Streb for *Steel (Slice)*, 2012

The arresting power of a Streb dance comes from the actual, before-your-eyes witnessing of ten soloists functioning with the unified discipline of a well-oiled machine. Her touring performers are experienced in controlling their movements so that individual actions mesh seamlessly into the unified design of the dance, expressed as a continuous flow of action with a varying tempo. In ballet, men traditionally lift women; in Streb's compositions, women hoist men with equal ease, all wearing formfitting full-body leotards, usually of a single color. The moving shapes of dancers can shimmer like the silhouettes of a school of fish, which, as if by signal, may suddenly swerve in a new direction, as a unit.

Many SLAM performances, at small and large venues, are available for viewing on the company website, streb.org. *Gauntlet* (2004) and *Slice* (2012) are notable for elements of raw danger. In the aptly titled *Gauntlet*, dancers dart under and out of the way of two cement blocks, hung on ropes swinging from the ceiling, and sweeping two feet off the floor. Movements are coordinated by using the pendulum swing as a timing device, accurate as a clock. Blocks are attached to ropes of unequal length, and one sequence involves the waning of the pendulum's motion, shortening its arc, encouraging a dancer to nudge closer. In *Slice*, an eight-foot steel I beam is suspended from the ceiling, hanging a few feet from the mat. Lying below on his back, a dancer spins the beam, his arms working to spin it faster as he begins to sit up, with the beam spinning just above the hair on his head. In both pieces, dancers literally stare into the face of danger, up close and personal.

THE HUMAN IMPULSE to fly like birds is an ancient dream, as old as the legend of the flight, and fall, of Icarus, and it is woven into our cultural mythology. In 1974, the world focused attention on Philippe Petit as he tiptoed, as if on air, along the braided cable wire spanning the 210-foot

gap between the top floors of the Twin Towers in New York City. This transcendent feat is depicted in Colum McCann's celebrated novel, *Let the Great World Spin*: "He was pureness moving. . . . He was inside and outside his body at the same time, indulging in what it meant to belong to the air."

Streb cherishes a remark made by Petit when he was asked, after the daring walk was completed, if he was scared: "Yes," he replied simply, "I fear for my life—but it's a detail." We should remember that the wings of Icarus were made of wax, and flying too close to the sun melted them. In the modern interpretation via Streb, the consequence of gravity is that if you ascend, you will also fall, and she builds the crash into dramatic moments of punctuation, as audible exclamation points. It is significant that Streb describes rhythm in terms of syllables in language, such as the iambic pentameter of Shakespeare, as a model for the temporal measure she creates in her dances.

Creating diagrammatic detail, especially at rehearsals, Streb habitually sketches the action she sees or imagines as another development in each performance. She fills notebooks, often using colored pencils

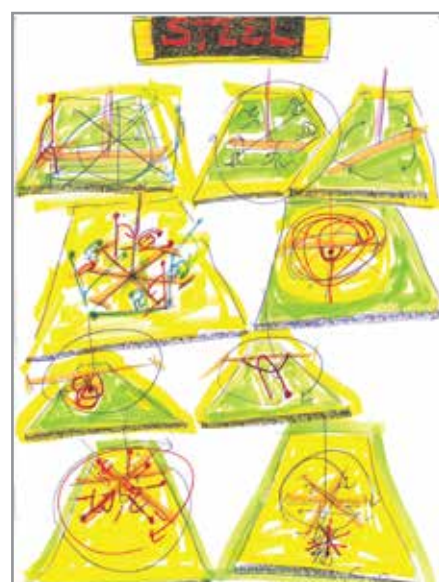
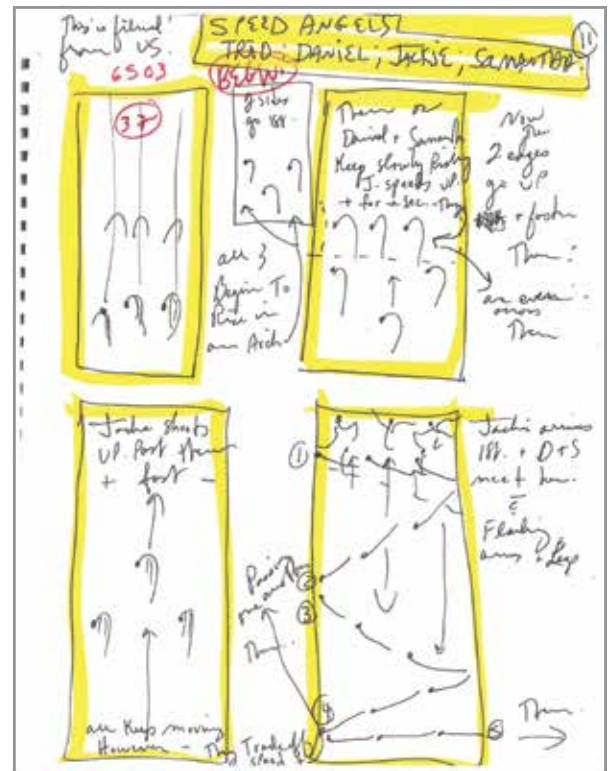




PHOTO BY JULIAN ANDREWS



(above) *One Extra Ordinary Day (Speed Angels)*, 2012, part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad for the Summer Games, with Fabio Tavares da Silva, Cassandre Joseph, and Jackie Carlson; (right) Diagram drawing by Elizabeth Streb for *Speed Angels*



PHOTO BY JULIAN ANDREWS

One Extra Ordinary Day (Human Fountain), 2012, part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad for the Summer Games, members of STREB EXTREME ACTION

to highlight aspects of a mechanical function. Shown here is an annotated sketch for the dance piece *Speed Angels* along with a photo from the performance. Comparing the sketches and indications of motion with actual performances offers the unique experience of seeing a concept unfold before your eyes, the diagram in your mind being enacted in real time.

In order to teach her dancers to fly, Streb must first teach them how to fall; with incremental increases in the height of each fall, they learn to overcome the natural fear of falling. They discover the involuntary way one's muscles can control body alignment, spreading impact and minimizing that fleeting

sensation that is more fear than pain. Her dancers learn that they should not begin a fall by jumping; instead, a gentle lean is sufficient to initiate a fall, which always begins very slowly.

A body falling from forty feet will accelerate to about six feet a second, about thirty-five miles an hour. Streb teaches her dancers to land in a horizontal alignment, in which ears, shoulders, arms, torso, hips, knees, and feet assume a perfect posture, as if the performers were standing upright. The impact sounding from the mat is spread equally through the mass of a 150-pound body. Streb describes poor timing as "arriving temporally inaccurately."

Streb has studied the physics of falling via a trial-and-error creative process, which she often describes as "heuristic," a combination of supposition and testing. In terms of a fundamental dimension, Streb believes "space is more comprehensible than time." Yet the dimension of time is not a visible dimension. Our awareness of the length or brevity of the passing of time, our subjective sense of time

passing slowly or quickly, is not measured by the movements of each dancer, but by the efforts of the coordinated team led by the sound signals of the troupe leader. In a dance choreographed by Streb, time becomes visible as a continuous series of glimpses, given in milliseconds and retained in afterimages. Streb's work references the animal and human locomotion studies by the nineteenth-century photographer Eadweard Muybridge, who created a series of staggered stopped moments through time; she was also influenced by the split-second photographs taken by Harold Edgerton, which depict a bullet captured in motion at the instant it slices a playing card in half.

Unlike a circus act, which is circumscribed by its short duration, a work by Streb evolves temporal episodes that are precisely measured by rapid changes in spatial position—one dancer leaps just before another lands, and the switch of their bodies marks the very manifestation of time in the visibility of a blur. So, Streb's dancers do not so much entertain us with their skills as they demonstrate in real time how their skill becomes an artful dodge of disaster.

Streb voices her radical ideas in a trenchant testament, *Streb: How to Become an Extreme Action Hero* (Feminist Press, 2010), a discussion on three levels: part autobiography, part biomechanics, and part poetry. The coalition of forces creates a phenomenon similar to her choreography: she lofts her narrative before the eyes and ears of a witness, paying keen attention to the reactions of her audience and their desire to be included in the experience.

Here, the choreographer speaks of the method she has pioneered, using the third person:

Practitioners of STREB technique cannot afford the "flight" response to a physical situation. Fast-twitch muscle and instantaneous brain responses are critical in dangerous moments, and these decisions have to happen in a split-second; flinching and pausing at these moments courts destruction and death. In STREB work, second-guessing oneself is anathema to survival, both for oneself and one's teammates.

Unpredictable movements arrest the attention of the witnesses as much as the performers. Streb uses the term "PopAction" to define this technique in her art, what it is that initiates a movement. "The first cause of motion is a muscle explosion," she explains. "PopAction is about exploding our bodies into the air all at once." Streb seeks to eliminate transitions, which irritate her with telltale signals of intention, such as the plié in ballet, invariably a prelude to a leap. The desire to fly involves a leap and a return to earth, but Streb understands that if you do this "you haven't changed your orientation in space. So it's not truly flying."

ADOPTED AT THE age of two, Streb knew her own stepfather as physically vigorous, fit from his long days as a stone mason and bricklayer. Streb came to admire the dignified sacrifice in his aging body; here she discovered her desire to use up her body, to hold nothing back, and go on until the impulse was exhausted. In helping her father on construction jobs, carrying heavy buckets of water at age eight, she proved to be strong, and she discovered that she could not only tolerate discomfort,



One Extra Ordinary Day (Skywalk), 2012, part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad for the Summer Games, with John Kasten, Elizabeth Streb, and Leonardo Giron Torres

PHOTO BY JULIAN ANDREWS

but also feel a curious assistance from the buoyancy and balance of the water in the buckets.

She took dance lessons from nuns in an all-girls Catholic school, and learned to draw, a lifelong way of examining her ideas. After majoring in dance in college, she graduated in 1972. After seeing the movie *Easy Rider*, she tucked her trousers into knee-high motorcycle boots, pushed her long hair inside a helmet, and drove her Honda 350 straight to New Orleans, and then onward to San Francisco, where she found jobs that earned her enough money for more dance classes. After relocating to New York, she took dance classes during the day and worked as a chef at night in restaurants. She says she learned the importance of timing from cooking for many people.

In 1992, she was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship. She saw providence in the earlier recognition by the MacArthur Foundation of Trisha Brown, Streb's most influential mentor, along with choreographer Merce Cunningham. In 2012, Streb was invited to stage seven events, titled *One Extra Ordinary Day*, for the London Festival as a prelude to the summer Olympics. An enlightening documentary film, *Born to Fly*, directed by Catherine Gund, features behind-the-scenes interviews with the performers, revealing the bonded adventure they felt being Streb dancers. The film includes the astonishing *Waterfall*, in which performers rise and fall on bungee cords from the Millennium Bridge, spanning the Thames. Their bobbing bodies carve a series of loops and swoops, like trained seagulls, flying above the water, tethered to a dramatic bridge of striking design, built exclusively to accommodate pedestrians. One performer has described the bungee experience: "I felt like a wild horse."

Born to Fly concludes with a personal culmination in *Skywalk*. Harnessed to strong winches from the top of the glass geodesic dome surmounting London's City Hall, Streb and two male dancers walk slowly down the sloping grade of the dome. Streb dedicated this very public event to Trisha Brown, in an homage to her 1970 piece *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, which was also re-created in 2010 in a walk by Streb down the outside wall of the Whitney Museum of American Art. The glass of the geodesic dome in London, designed by Buckminster Fuller, reflected the whiteness of the clouds overhead, mixed with watery ripples from refractions off the Thames. Preserved on film, the harnessed trio seem to be pioneers exploring an orb in outer space. Indeed, one dancer said, "It was like walking on the moon." ❧

CHRISTOPHER BUSA is founder and editorial director of Provincetown Arts Press.

I Can See Your Architecture from Here

AN ARTIST'S VIEW

By Bailey Bob Bailey

IT'S 1976, AND I've just entered the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) on Fifty-third Street, NYC. The staircase to my left is my threshold to the collection. What are the next three paintings I see? Wyeth's *Christina's World* is on the first landing, visible as I ascend the staircase, illustrating an unforgettable narrative. The next painting, Picasso's *Guernica*, currently lives in Madrid, and the third, Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, has a classic Don McLean song forever attached to it. But what really remains in my mind's eye is the staircase. The rooms afterward are a chain of linear boxes, but the architecture affirms a sense of rightness, a revelatory spirit.

For an artist, the quality of a museum experience is directly connected to its capacity to inspire. I want to ponder, to be moved to wonder. As an artist, I must feel something akin to a dream, however small, in the half-light of the space in order to experience the impetus of the next step in my making life. A genuine response is hard to quantify but it must clear the distractions, architectural and otherwise, if it is to initiate a meaningful encounter. We are dependent on the actualized expression of the objects. Art might not move in a linear manner, but the museum is the pitch we perform in, no matter how small.

In 1978, I. M. Pei's East Building of the National Gallery of Art opened in the nation's capital to great fanfare. Applauding its oversized artworks in an oversized atrium, with a giant Alexander Calder mobile, a gargantuan Joan Miró tapestry, and Robert Motherwell's thirty-foot elegy—including the largest doorstep known to man, a Henry Moore bronze behemoth—the new art world roared. The slow and escalating scream began—we were meant to feel both the immensity of the art and the building that possessed them. Following the movement to build unconventional structures—which had been initiated by the creation of the Guggenheim, Wright's spiraling masterwork, and New York's

cantilevered Whitney—architecture was beginning to consume the art it housed.

Two years later, with the opening of the Picasso retrospective at MoMA, the term *blockbuster* became the watchword for the world's art museums. The success of the MoMA exhibition astounded the art world. Art was now to be seen as an event, to be housed in the purity and sanctity of the great museum. The general public could and would celebrate the arts, and museum additions were needed to showcase these exhibitions. From then on, the buildings became destinations themselves, fun houses to travel to, checkmarks on a bucket list, such as the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, or the Getty Center in LA. In 2000, the New Museum in NYC, with the appearance of seven boxes stacked askew, married the outer experience with the inner.

But what of that experience?

In the best viewing experience, viewers do not get lost in an exhibition, nor are they led around like ponies. Multimedia in and of itself doesn't detract. Large installations can be intimate. Openness can be comfortable. My criterion is what is the taste in my mouth—positive or negative—when I leave an exhibition. Is a museum reflective, bombastic,

Images from top left going counterclockwise: I. M. Pei, National Gallery of Art, East Wing, Washington, DC; Alexander Calder, *Untitled*, 1976; Joan Miró, *Woman*, 1976; Robert Motherwell, *Reconciliation Elegy*, 1978; Frank Lloyd Wright, Guggenheim Museum, NYC; Marcel Breuer, Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC; Pablo Picasso retrospective at MoMA, NYC; Peter Eisenman, Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio; Richard Meier and Robert Irwin, J. Paul Getty Museum, LA; Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa/SANAA, New Museum, NYC; Yoshio Taniguchi, MoMA's Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium; Snøhetta, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Richard Serra, *Sequence*, 2006; David Smith, *Voltri VII*, 1962; Michael Heizer, *Double Negative*, 1970; Gerhard Richter, *Janus*, 1983; Sigmar Polke, *The Spirits that Lend Strength Are Invisible III*, 1988; Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson, *East Coast West Coast*, 1969; Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1970; Joan Jonas, *My New Theater III, In the Shadow a Shadow*, 1999; Bob Thompson, *Garden of Music*, 1960; Henri Matisse, *Large Decoration with Masks*, 1953; James Ensor, *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*, 1888; Jeff Koons, *Puppy*, 1992; Roxy Paine, *Yield*, 2011; Mark Rothko rooms; Anselm Kiefer, *Deutschlands Geisteshelden*, 1973; Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656; Gustave Courbet, *The Painter's Studio*, 1855; Lynda Benglis, *Contraband*, 1969; Cy Twombly, *The Ceiling*, 2010; Jackson Pollock, *One: Number 31*, 1950; Installation view of *RYB: Mary Heilmann Paintings, 1975–78*; Claes Oldenburg, *Battleship: Centerpiece for a Party*, 1962, and *Cash Register*, 1961; Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937; Andrew Wyeth, *Christina's World*, 1948; Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889; Dia:Beacon, Beacon, New York; Robert Irwin entrance; Renzo Piano, Menil Collection, Houston, Texas; Georges Braque, *Large Interior with Palette*, 1942; Donald Judd Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas; Fogg Museum (Renzo Piano renovation), Cambridge, Massachusetts, interior view of the pigment collection; Double-faced stamp seal, Neolithic period, 6,000–4,000 BCE; Alexander Calder, *Calder's Circus*, 1926–31; Renzo Piano, Whitney Museum of American Art, Chelsea, NYC; Tony Smith, *Die*, 1962; Max Beckmann, *Self-Portrait in Tuxedo*, 1927; Marlene Dumas, *The Painter*, 1994, and view of the Stedelijk Museum; Fogg Museum, courtyard vista of Van Gogh, *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Paul Gauguin*, 1888; James Corner Field Operations, High Line Park, NYC; Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Rough Sea, 1840–45*; Edgar Degas, *Scene from the Steeplechase: The Fallen Jockey*, 1866–97; Benthem Crouwel Architects, three views of the interior and exterior of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; William Zorach, *Provincetown Madonna*, 1916; Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao; Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, and Fong & Chan, De Young Museum, San Francisco, California; View of Atelier Brancusi Museum, Paris, designed by Renzo Piano; Camille Henrot, *No Message*, 2016; Detail of Greek black-figure pottery; a drag race "Christmas tree" starting light

VIEW



pedantic, ethereal, confounding, conceited, erudite, lazy, or just plain fun?

The Museum of Modern Art has continually grown with architectural iterations, culminating most recently into a world of crowd control and straight up empty awesomeness. In the last machination to its central courtyard, it became so immense that all human art looked insignificant by half. I'm reminded of great earthworks, such as Michael Heizer's land art construction *Double Negative* on the Virgin River Mesa in Nevada's high desert, which literally makes nothing something. Space becomes solid. The art is the void, but so is the surrounding landscape. The MoMA courtyard is about consuming, not providing; space opens up to space, no art is defined, nothing is presented.

Likewise, upon entering the new San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), a grand postmodern amphitheater says it all. It's as if the designers are saying, "Climb our edifice and experience the glory of abundance." Sadly, the Richard Serra in this hothouse stadium belong in the "Six Flags over MoMA" space, a permanent contemporary maze for the artist who builds with a luxury-liner budget and tools. A David Smith *Voltri* sculpture would look like opal earrings by comparison. Giant exhibition boxes follow. We are backdropped by a Sigmar Polke nickel-and-resin pour, as well as yet another scraped abstraction by Gerhard Richter. These large paintings kind of echo the SFMOMA's interior design: grand and

seemingly approachable, but in the end merely a play on negation—flashy, but not much there. The museum's layout confuses; like a modern-day Louvre, I never quite knew where I was or where I was headed. Maybe bad signage compounded the crystalline maze, but none of it helped me experience the art.

The Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Boston doesn't even feel as if it wants to show art. The exhibition spaces there seem to be in the way of the greater whole; entrances to galleries are hidden by magnificent elevators, walls are secondary to windows, while the edifice of the museum would no doubt best be seen from a boat in Boston Harbor. I don't own a boat.

A single piece of art, to be sure, can change your life. It's happened to me many times: A Robert Smithson/Nancy Holt video, *East Coast West Coast*, from the late '60s can have the staying power of Smithson's earthwork *Spiral Jetty*, something few of us will ever actually see. Bob Thompson's *Garden of Music*, at the Wadsworth Atheneum; Joan Jonas's *My New Theater III*, *In the Shadow a Shadow*; James Ensor's *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*; or an obtuse Mary Heilmann saturated in its high-toned bluntness. But a museum isn't one painting or even a suite of artworks; a museum is a beta zone, an airfield. A place that unfolds an idea, sparks ignition, and says, "The road is yours."

Some art needs to be huge—a Roxy Paine tree, for instance, or a wall of Matisse cut-outs, an

Anselm Kiefer painting, or a Jeff Koons puppy. Everything doesn't have to be a room of Rothkos. Large works need dedicated space, but they also need context. Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas* begot Gustave Courbet's *Atelier* begot Jackson Pollock's spunkfest—take your pick. From Lynda Benglis's pours to Cy Twombly's Greek salutations, large works are required by all artists these days, even those with postage stamp practices. Alas, so much large work looks like 1 percent building costs, the art's measurements outweighing its power quotient.

In the fall of 2005, there was a Claes Oldenburg show at Zwirner & Wirth, one of several "museum galleries" in New York City. On view were his *Cash Register*, painted like a three-dimensional Pollock, complete with blue globs, lumpen and derisive on its singular pedestal, followed by the birthday cake *Battleship*, dirty white, hanging head high, floating in a sea of air, pushing my sight and mind below the waves. The freedom of the work always comes through first and then the art's history: Abstract Expressionism on enlarged and miniaturized implied forms. Our realities are Play-Doh to be manipulated and presented with grace, beauty, reflection, and a thorough disregard of optical truths. The best architectural interiors manipulate that Play-Doh with a conscious aplomb.

My favorite American venues by far are Houston's Menil Collection and the Dia:Beacon in New York—one a ground-up venture, the other a biscuit factory renovation. The architecture in both is treated equally with sculptural rigor and as spaces to enhance art. As you come upon the large Braque at the Menil, after skirting across the dark patinated wooden floors, the exhibition walls seem intimate, living-room-esque: the ceiling doesn't expand—it houses. At Dia, a Donald Judd room of plywood boxes murmur process, and their severity translates to me in religious units, "20 cubits by 60 cubits . . .," but a manufacturing backdrop helps to explain the artist's machine-made intentions. Judd's art often needs large chambers to clarify the works, so much so that he eventually procured two brick artillery sheds in Marfa, Texas, to house his aluminum box sculptures. Some art is so site-specific it is in need of architectural framing.

In the newly renovated Harvard Art Museums, the architecture only adds to the art experience. In the Fogg Museum, stop in any room and vistas are present, points of interest are highlighted, and the mood is comforting and conducive to exploration. Details become important, not secondary. We are encouraged to go back to exhibitions and look with more scrutiny. A fourth-floor view of the pigment collection through two walls of glass only entices the viewer and gives the middle-ground visual experience a unique impression of importance.

The new Met Breuer couldn't be more different in aesthetic from the old Whitney Museum of American Art. The latter's joie de vivre, with its Calder *Circus*, immediately sucked you in, but what followed was a ride up the double-wide elevator, arriving in a boxed canyon, then pushing



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forward to the next pit of darkness. Amazingly, in one transition the Met finally brought together the interior and exterior of this Modernist masterpiece by exhibiting a simple show called *Unfinished: Thoughts Left Visible*. In my walk-through, the interior felt like a building of rooms, not caverns. The Turner Gallery became a place to return to, taking in Degas's *The Fallen Jockey* surrounded by Turner's monochromed seascapes.

Walking along the High Line toward the new Whitney, the raised rail bed invites the viewer to investigate: it expands our vision, making us see differently and find new avenues into the site-specific art and its powerfully infused surprises. The culminating Chelsea Whitney is a light-filled point of resolution. The architecture is user-friendly, warm, and welcoming. As in a visit to the Met, you can spend many hours on one floor. No need to cram the whole mix into one day. Like the Menil and the Fogg, the Whitney seems to be made for artists. I feel welcomed every time I enter the place. Elevators open to ovals; small rooms resist compartmentalization. Each floor has spots of rest and focus. Outdoor patios are inhabited by sculpture and the city. One day, I watched a small American flag, somewhere on the New York skyline, perch itself precariously atop Tony Smith's cubed sculpture—again, moments of wonder.

When I was in Amsterdam two falls ago, I saw the Marlene Dumas retrospective at the Stedelijk Museum. The building, with a contemporary classic design, is over-the-top, unique, and fun. Shaped like a vast rectangular basin, it is better known now as "The Bathtub." Thankfully, the art in the place made me forget the long staircase, the white wall's expectancy, and the marbled acreage. Art always wins out, no matter how much a museum tries to hide it.

Recently, while visiting the de Young Museum in San Francisco, I found myself measuring the interior ramps, following artworks into acute corners and tributaries of asymmetrical exhibition spaces. Delighted, I eventually was nudged into a one-on-one with a small William Zorach *Provincetown Madonna*. The museum handles the idea of approach like a Corten steel aircraft carrier, with hidden entrances and landing-strip staircases, but I often felt like a mouse in a maze of earthly delights. Somehow the museum engaged as much as the art. How does one build intimacy? The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC, and the Frick Collection in NYC demonstrate how a domestic venue makes art more intimate, more accessible. But paneled walls and wallpaper aren't the only ways to present comfort. A lot of art today needs cold hard space to pop or shine. Still, in order to enhance that experience everything matters: scale, lighting, color, placement, and attitude.

Constantin Brancusi's art studio, rebuilt as a facsimile in the cobble-stoned piazza in front of the Centre Pompidou in Paris, is a reflection of artistic life for two or three generations. This museum studio is beyond myth-making—it's an homage to Brancusi's life as a sculptor. Empty spaces make room for art finished and

half-baked; walls become paintings, backdrops, and even supports. Everything is surrounded by a square fishbowl, and the artist's studio appears like Greek black-figure pottery in a sheltered vitrine, something to be studied and unwrapped, something to be found.

Perhaps my real interest is not in the museum's architecture but more in its exhibition design. But there must be a reason that I like 80 percent of the shows at the new Whitney, and that the Palais de Tokyo in Paris can have a beautiful exhibition so stunning that I can overlook bad architecture or poor design. London's Tate Modern has a giant public space activated by some artwork and merely filled by others. The last time I was there, a group of artists designed multiple swing sets, which was fun, just not too terribly moving. I'm not asking for a universal museum experience—that would be boring and counterproductive. My interest is in presentation, the ability of a museum to get out of the way, and how a building creates a lens focused on art and the act of discovery.

The art museum's primary standard should be: *do no harm*. The self-aggrandizing art museum must prioritize its mission and remember its purpose. If you make a fun house, it better be fun, otherwise most art venues will have a severe shelf life. The success of a truly great art institution is its self-awareness as a vehicle and presenter of its contents. As an unfold of truths and a guide, the museum should catch your eye and

start your experience. After all is said and done, are museums not housing our gods of the day? How else will we transcend our life's patter and find greater truths. 

BAILEY BOB BAILEY has received awards from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Twice a Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, he has shown extensively throughout the United States and exhibited internationally as well. Most recently, he had a retrospective at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum in 2016. He is now represented by the Schoolhouse Gallery in Provincetown.



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Sean Baker's Magic Kingdom

IN SEARCH OF THE EVANESCENT RAINBOW OF CINEMA

By Howard Karren



THE AMERICAN DREAM is an illusion: that's not news. The promise of class mobility that drew the poor of the world to this abstract creation, the United States of America, was largely a fraudulent sales pitch and, at best, a test of faith.



In the *American Dream*, no one is held back by the circumstances of his or her birth—it's an existential landscape in which anyone can become a millionaire by sheer force of will. The dream is classless, casteless, unbounded by fancy manners or bloodlines. All you need to do is work hard. And then, when things look hopeless, you click your heels and say, "There's no place like home."

(above) Valeria Cotto and Brooklynn Kimberly Prince discover a real (not virtual) rainbow above the Orlando-Kissimmee fleabag hotel Magic Castle, where most of Sean Baker's *The Florida Project* takes place.

(left) Three barely supervised kids in the movie, Scooty (Christopher Rivera), Moonee (Brooklynn Kimberly Prince), and red-haired Jancey (Valeria Cotto) make a rumpus in a deserted housing complex in the Orlando-Kissimmee area near Disney World. PHOTOS: A24

Reality check: it doesn't usually work that way. Discrimination is everywhere—by race, gender, ethnicity, religion. There have been agents of class mobility in the United States: the New Deal, World War II, the GI Bill, the rise of unions. But they have only reinforced the fantasy that it happens all the time.

Perhaps because of that collective Dream, American society has had a hard time accepting the welfare state. The concept of a paternalistic safety net, a communal responsibility to those unable to maintain the basic minimums, is regarded with deep suspicion, alternately defended and demonized. In America, the empire of the individualistic New World, functional welfare just doesn't jibe. The myth of freedom requires risk and danger. Overcoming insurmountable obstacles—or succumbing to them—is a rite of passage.

The American cinema embodies that American Dream. Movies artfully shield the Dream's illusory nature, whether they portray the result of believing in it as idyllic or tragic or anything in between. That's because the cinema itself is borne out of an illusion—the image of real life. In order to suspend disbelief about what's happening on-screen, it's necessary to forget the machinery that created it. That machinery has changed over time, and so have the particulars of the Dream (a chicken in every pot; a little pink house in the suburbs; a life of boundless riches and leisure). But the system of haves and have-nots remains, and the insistent belief in transcendence continues unabated.

Sean Baker, a young director working in the sphere of independent film, has produced a trio of astonishing features with his screenwriter, Chris Bergoch—*Starlet* (2012), *Tangerine* (2015), and, in 2017, *The Florida Project*, which gained a modicum of respectability by earning a Best Supporting Actor Oscar nomination for Willem Dafoe—that have brilliantly and movingly captured the essence of that American Dream as it lives and breathes in the new millennium. Baker is an astute observer and careful researcher. His Sun Belt version of the Dream is pop-culture savvy, cynical, and thwarted. He focuses on an underclass



(top) Sean Baker (far left, wearing a black baseball cap) and his cinematographer, Alexis Zabe (at camera), shoot the three kids at the center of *The Florida Project* as they enjoy some ice cream at Twistee Treat; (bottom) Willem Dafoe, in his Oscar-nominated role as Bobby, the Magic Castle's building manager, is a father figure of sorts to young Moonee. PHOTOS: A24



Bria Vinaite plays the young single mom, Halley, who has a mischievous daughter, Moonee. PHOTO: A24

of true believers—sex workers—who live on the fringes of society and who dream of inclusion. Sex workers have always been outsiders, and they are intimately familiar with homelessness and social rejection, the most punishing fates of postindustrial America. “No place like home,” indeed. The culture wars are a smoke screen—the proverbial opiate of the masses, behind which economic exploitation runs rampant. And in the information age, the notion of home is both physical and virtual. When Moonee, the little girl at the center of *The Florida Project*, realizes that she's going to be taken into foster care because her mother is a prostitute, she runs away with a friend to Disney World. It's the only kind of American Dream she's ever known—to her, it's more than a fantasy. It's deliverance.

BAKER IS THE HEIR, ironically enough, of an aesthetic movement that blossomed in the Old World after World War II—Italian neorealism. In the wake of the war's devastation, the working classes of Europe saw an empty future. Fascism was supposed to be a way out of chronic poverty and oppression. It proved to be a disaster. Filmmakers in Italy in the postwar years, starting with Rossellini and followed by Fellini, Visconti, De Sica, and generations of filmmakers to come, fashioned a mode of storytelling that spoke to that disillusionment. They took the camera outside to the streets, seeking undressed, hyperreal locations, especially the haunts of the poor. They eschewed major-studio production values, even when making use of the grand film studio built in Rome by Mussolini, Cinecittà. They hired nonprofessionals to act, preferring raw talent to theatrical nuance. Most of all, they made the yearning for deliverance among the poor the central motivator of their storytelling: the pain and inevitable despair of the underclass grabs the viewer and never lets go. Who can forget the plight of the father and son in De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*? Who can ignore the utter wretchedness of Giulietta Masina's prostitute at the end of Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria*?

The documentary-like aesthetic of neorealism has come back in vogue in Europe—in the handheld cinematography of the Dardenne brothers, say, or the Dogme 95 movement—after decades of formalist, Godardian experimentalism. And it also has found a home in American independent cinema. Still, the filmmakers who have applied this aesthetic to contemporary characters rarely deal with the same sense of desperation and disillusionment that the Italian neorealists did in the years following World War II. Sean Baker does. In *Starlet*, he follows the attempts of a porn actress to establish an emotional link with an elderly widow in the San Fernando Valley. In *Tangerine*, he sets up a romantic ruckus among transgender hookers in Hollywood. And in *The Florida Project*, he spends a languorous summer in a fleabag motel in Orlando-Kissimmee dubbed the “Magic Castle,” which is the unintended home for the local underclass. In these kitschy mean streets,



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Sean Baker (far right), holding an iPhone, maps a shot from *Tangerine* with cinematographer Radium Cheung (with hand up) and actor Kitana Kiki Rodriguez. PHOTO: MAGNOLIA PICTURES

Baker finds a mother lode of strength, pain, and implacable fate.

SECRETS AND FALSE IDENTITIES play an important role in Baker's films. In *Starlet*, a very blond and aimless Jane (Dree Hemingway) has just arrived in the Valley. She buys a thermos from elderly Sadie (Besedka Johnson) at a yard sale, and back in her rented room discovers thousands of dollars in cash rolled up and hidden inside. She returns to Sadie's house to see if the older woman knows about the cash, and guiltily imposes her friendship upon her. In between her hours spent with Sadie, it's revealed, almost as a throwaway, that Jane is a porn actress. But, like the found cash, that fact remains unspoken between the two women. Sadie, too, has a secret—one that will explain why she put up with such an intrusion by a stranger in the first place. Dysfunctional as their relationship is, it answers a desperate need for connection between them.

In *Tangerine*, Sin-Dee (Kitana Kiki Rodriguez), a transgender prostitute, returns from a month in jail to Santa Monica Boulevard in Los Angeles to share a doughnut with her friend Alexandra (Mya Taylor), also a trans hooker, on Christmas Eve. Sin-Dee learns from Alexandra that her pimp and boyfriend, Chester, has been unfaithful to her, and that sets off a day and night of frantic, almost farcical, revenge. Alexandra leaves out some key details, however, and that lie of omission, as well as the down-low lies of a married Armenian cab driver attracted to the trans hookers in the neighborhood, brings feelings of betrayal and anger to a boil. In the end, in the whirl of distrust and hostility in which they live, the friendship between Sin-Dee and Alexandra, as fellow outcasts, endures.

And in *The Florida Project*, deceptions are at the heart of life in the Magic Castle. Due to local housing law, the motel cannot allow long-term residency, so those who room there are kicked out for one day a month in order to remain legally transient. These "invisible homeless" live without kitchens or any sense of permanence.

The characters maintain false fronts as well. Moonee (Brooklyn Kimbly Prince) doesn't fess up when she and two of her friends set some nearby abandoned housing on fire. And her single mother, Halley (Bria Vinaite), who looks to be less than fifteen years older than her daughter, drums up cash by selling fake fund-raising goods and conning one man into buying a time-share that doesn't exist. The Magic Castle's tolerant manager, Bobby (Willem Dafoe), notices men going in and out of their motel room and warns Halley that it can't go on. Moonee barely notices, and her mother finds ways to keep the men in the periphery of her attention. But in the end, someone rats on them, and the consequences are dire and predictable.

The secrets in *The Florida Project* are less like shameful, repressed truths than simply a means of survival, and their revelation is not a surprise. Not so in *Starlet* and *Tangerine*. The former is structured like an O. Henry short story, with key details withheld until a twist ending. And *Tangerine* is a classical comedy in queer modern garb: everyone comes together in one location at the end, where all is confessed and resolved.

The storytelling structure of *The Florida Project* is the most fluid and least pointed of Baker's films, and it most strongly echoes the freewheeling neorealist aesthetic. That echo is also apparent in the extreme pathos the movie elicits from the unrealized dreams of its characters. Moonee is a budding sociopath—her playtime with peers is resourceful but wildly uninhibited—and Halley, her mom, is a seasoned petty criminal. Though the bond between them is real, their day-to-day pretense of familial bliss is doomed from the very beginning. They are unmoored from the rigid morality and sense of decency that traps the characters of postwar Italian films, but they suffer the same fate. An absent welfare state leaves the denizens of postwar Italy neglected and hopeless. But in Moonee's Orlando, it's the welfare state itself that is her biggest obstacle.

CHANGES IN FILMMAKING technology also connect Baker's films to Italian neorealism and



Dree Hemingway plays Jane, a twenty-one-year-old who befriends an elderly Sadie (Besedka Johnson) after finding a stash of cash inside an object she bought at the older woman's yard sale, in Sean Baker's 2012 film, *Starlet*.

PHOTO: MUSIC BOX FILMS

to the New Wave in France. The increased portability of cameras in the postwar era revolutionized the way filmmakers worked: location shooting became simpler, lighting more naturalistic. Likewise, much has been made of the fact that Baker shot *Tangerine* with an iPhone, which was only slightly modified to produce a wide-screen image. The cinematography in the film is certainly energized as a result, and the sun-saturated colors of Los Angeles (thus the title, *Tangerine*) are beautifully rendered without any of the fussiness of painstakingly gorgeous photography.

The Florida Project was shot with conventional movie cameras, yet it has even more of a documentary feel to it. Baker romanticizes the kitschy iconography of the semitropical Florida landscape much as the neorealists did with the ruins of war and the desolation of impoverished neighborhoods. Baker can be seen in the B-roll footage for *The Florida Project* bemoaning how much easier it was to work with an iPhone in *Tangerine*. And for Moonee's dash into Disney World, the filmmakers did, in fact, shoot surreptitiously with an iPhone to evade the need for permits. The effect is intensely subjective and powerful. The rainbow that appears to Moonee and her friends in the middle of the film was a real rainbow, not a digital effect. It takes a uniquely open filmmaker to be able to adjust and capture such happy accidents.

Baker has an uncanny ability to enter the milieu of the sex worker and see her world through her eyes from the inside out. The casting of nonprofessionals helps in this, such as the two trans leads of *Tangerine*. But Baker works comfortably with Hollywood actors as well. Dree Hemingway, who plays Jane in *Starlet*, is the daughter of Mariel Hemingway. Willem Dafoe, cast against type in *The Florida Project* as a well-meaning, patient schnook of a building manager, gives arguably the best performance of his career.

Dafoe aside, Baker seems to have an intense empathy with the women in his films. And while

he clearly recognizes the unique debasement women suffer in the sex industry—particularly trans women—he also sees their power and truth. Prostitution, after all, is less about sex than economics. And even hookers buy into the American Dream.

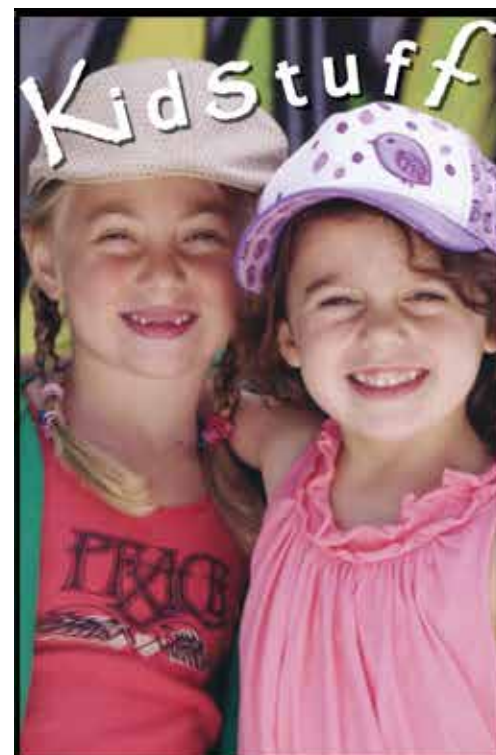
Baker, who was crowned Filmmaker on the Edge at this year's Provincetown International Film Festival, has begun to be acknowledged in the independent film world. It's time for him to be more broadly recognized, and for the film firmament to take him in. Hopefully, he'll never lose that special connection to the underclass that lives among us. Or to its vision of life over the rainbow. ☒

HOWARD KARRER studied semiotics at Brown, got his MFA at Columbia's film school, and worked as an editor at Premiere magazine for thirteen years. He is currently the arts editor at the Provincetown Banner, where he writes a regular column of movie reviews called This Week's Rent. He also runs the Provincetown Film Art Series at the Waters Edge Cinema, and co-owns the Alden Gallery in Provincetown.

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How to Cook a Lobster

By Dennis Minsky

"How to Cook a Lobster," minus the recipe, is forthcoming in the *Beachcombers Artists' Cookbook*, a collection of anecdotes and recipes from members of the historic Beachcombers Club. Founded in Provincetown in 1916 by prominent artists of the time, some of whom also founded the Provincetown Art Association in 1914, the club held meetings on Saturday night: cocktails at six, dinner at seven, meeting at eight, then music, chanteys, and stories. The first questions asked of initiates: "Can you sing a song, write a poem, carve a block of wood, and, most important, can you cook?" Food is representative of what we share as a token of being together, and high standards were set by Beachcombers members who became prominent restaurateurs. In this peek from the upcoming publication, Dennis Minsky recalls events from fifty years ago, when he was cabin boy of the club, with his own key to the building.

— Christopher Busa

IT WAS A RARE DAY OFF in August 1970, and a beautiful day it was, and Ivan and Alex and I had dropped some mescaline and were wandering around downtown. It definitely was a festive day, a day that kept on rolling out, wave after wave over my chilled forebrain, and everything I saw was a brand new version of what it was, and everything was funny and profound at the same time. A couple of beers, foamy and dark, in the spiritual calm of the Fo'c'sle, and we reemerged stumbling into the bright hubbub of Commercial Street, jostling with the tourists and the passersby. All the heads were bobbing up and down, like puppets. A little kid in a stroller looked up and said hi to me, thoughtfully, and I said hi back—and I meant it. That was that and we moved on, through Lopes Square, past the footlongs and the wild smell of fried clams, out onto MacMillan Wharf. The whale-watch boats were coming and going, but the fishing boats were mostly tied up.

What we looked like: All shabbily dressed, of middling height—I was, perhaps, a bit shorter. Ivan, a con artist from Providence, stout and ruddy, with red hair and beard and piercing blue eyes. Alex, from who-knows-where, a bit rotund and always jolly, with a European air about him and an accent that indicated multiple languages therein. I was from Pennsylvania. I have no real sense of the face I look out of, even after years of inspection: like most, it is neither handsome nor not, safe to say agreeable-looking, of no real account but no threat to anyone either.

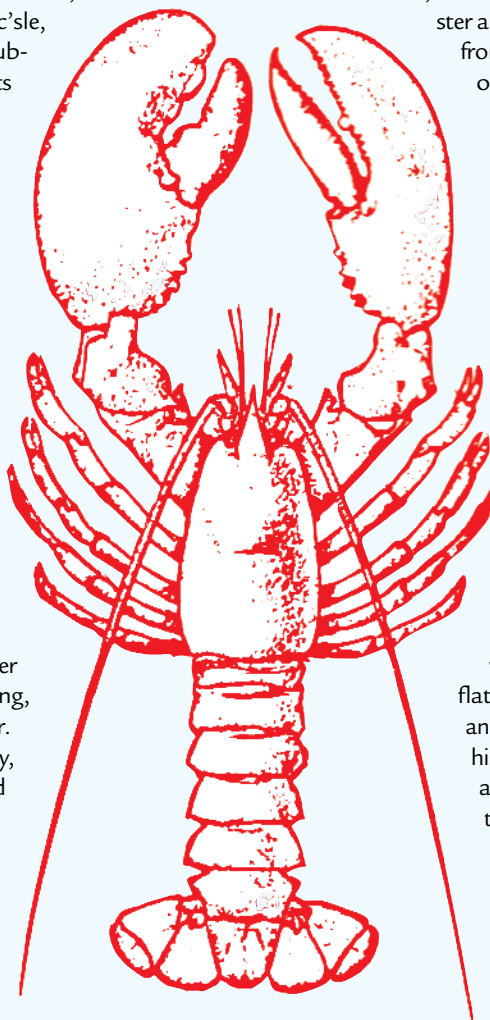
We saw Jimmy Santos on the *Excalibur* deck. "Hey, Suckass!" Ivan called out, and Jimmy smiled, and called back in a thick Boston accent: "Come over heah!" One look at us and he proclaimed, "You guys is some fucked up . . . want a lobstah?" Sure we did, we wanted everything and anything (and not a thing) at that point. He hauled out a monster from a plastic fish box, covered in damp eelgrass. "Good ten pounds, I reckon."

Maybe it was. Its antennae were twitching, and its banded claws were flailing, and it was ours. We carried it back off the wharf, the wet cardboard box it was in disintegrating at every step, so that we ended up cradling it like a baby.

We headed back east up Commercial, past the shops and the galleries, through the bobbing heads, letting people pet our lobster along the way. I thought one comely young woman from Ohio was going to join us, she was so enamored of Stanley (we named him Stanley), but I turned around and she had disappeared. Everything was happening so fast. My frontal lobe was still frosty, and that was not a bad thing.

There was no question where we were going: The Beachcombers. I was cabin boy (call it caretaker) and had the key to the place and it called to us like a sultry siren to becalmed sailors. We stumbled inside, took a step down into the cool darkness of the hulk, and I crossed myself (and I'm Jewish!). The dusty floorboards, the sooted walls, the smell of old beer and cigars welcomed us. We threw open the double doors to the deck and the sun spilled in with a vengeance. It was low tide just beyond, and some gulls were having an argument. We went in and put Stanley down on the Captain's Table, center stage, and discussed his fate. "Release him!" I cried, but my colleagues pointed out that the tide was wrong: "Can't have the old boy cruisin' all over the flats—and the gulls would have him in a flash!" Ivan and Alex proclaimed. "Into the pot!" Stanley, twitching his antennae this way and that, shuffling around like a drunk, suddenly backed away from me, edging toward them, seeming to take their point.

It was decided. Another cool wave washed over me. Some stumbling ensued: how strange to put your foot in one place and have it land on another, strange to say one word and have it come out altered, so hard to reach for a thought and have it fly away.





(above) The author, around the time the story took place (opposite page) Illustration of a lobster by Jackson Lambert, which appeared in Howard Mitcham's *Provincetown Seafood Cookbook*
COURTESY OF NAPI VAN DERECK

"How we gonna get this killin' done?" I asked. I had never cooked a lobster; I was from Pennsylvania.

"You steam it, stupid," said Ivan. "Yeah," said Alex. "In water?" I asked. "Beer is better," said Alex. Off we went to Tillie's Market for some beer, after putting Stanley in a bed of damp seaweed in the dead cold ashes in the fireplace with the screen up. Out into the bright sunlight we forged, up the street past Mary Heaton Vorse's tumbledown house, past Cook Street and the old schoolhouse, past Howland, up to the little store across from Pat de Groot's that sold GIQs of Pickwick Ale. Good to see Johnnie Jason and Tillie, good to bask in their attention, good to wander back to Stanley with four big chilled bottles clanking in their paper sacks. Made every curb. We had a bottle for each of us, and one for Stanley. Did it matter that it was chilled? Nothing but the best for Stanley.

Now Howard Mitcham and Jackson Lambert stepped out of Bryant's Market. Two old guys, compared to us. Jackson: a muted harlequin, part seer and part clown, with sad, introspective eyes; Howard, a regular scowling madman, angry eyes blazing, perhaps because his ears failed him. They were on a mission only they could explain, with a small jar of capers and a loaf of French bread between them. Howard's musical rants lacked significant consonants at the beginnings and ends of words because he was mostly a deaf-mute. For the same reason, there was random modulation of pitch and tone: his utterings were tone poems to us, and puzzles to be deciphered at the same time.

"Ood 'ay 'entlemEN! WaZZin' a 'SAccc?" "Beer."

So they joined us. What is most relevant here is that Howard Mitcham was a renowned cook and a great writer; so was Jackson Lambert.

Back at the Beachcombers, we introduced Howard and Jackson to Stanley in his bed of ashes. He twitched his antennae and swiveled his eyeballs. Howard was impressed: "BEUEUEU'FALLLLL!"

I clambered up into the beams to get at Eddie Euler's and Bruce McKain's stashes: pints of bourbon and rye . . . "Old Panther" or some such shit—or was it sinful gin? Eddie always left his behind the hanging oregano bouquet and Bruce's was up past a wedged-in English biscuit tin. It was not the right thing to do, taking their whiskey, but I was in the moment, we had to entertain our celebrated guests, and I could always make it good before the next meeting on Saturday.

Now into the whiskey. No ice but the caked-up shavings from the old freezer. Sitting around the Captain's Table, crusted mugs in hand, Stanley in the middle: The conversation hinged on Stanley's fate, and so, too, the reverse. I again expressed my reservations. Life and death were discussed. Eat or be eaten. What matters, Howard sort of said, is the meal. "Do the potatoes in the field, wrenched from the good earth, cry out in pain?" Jackson sort of said. And: "Does the flat-eyed flounder gaze up from the pan in judgment?" OK. The good things in life always come dear, Howard sort of said.

Looking down on us were the artists of yore. Up in the smoky beams were whale ribs, rusted grommets, a broken chalice, a gas mask, a party hat, woks and pots, the dust of ages.

OK. OK. How was it to be done? Howard loudly advocated for water and a teaspoon of ginger, then steam. Jackson opined his most memorable lobster was done in half Châteaufort-du-Pape and half Pouilly-Fuissé. I looked around and found a half a bottle of old Riesling, probably gone by; that and the Pickwick

Ale, which was fast disappearing. Ivan, with a smile, had one more suggestion: "A pinch of mescaline: 3,4,5-trimethoxyphenethylamine."

OK. OK. I liked this idea, and by osmosis it gained group approval. "Punnim' inna wok!" cried Howard, and this became our chant: "Punnim inna wok, punnim inna wok, punnim inna fuckin' wok!"

Stanley was immersed in his psychedelic bath, one small and precious blue tablet dissolved in salt water and lovingly stirred, and the pot was prepared, ready to light. What else did we need? Drawn butter. More beer. Someone went for it. The door slammed and the sound reverberated throughout the hulk.

I removed Stanley's bands and had a heart to heart with him. I remembered Izaak Walton's advice on putting a frog on a hook for bait:

"In so doing, use him as though you loved him."

(Was Stanley a he? Yes, he had claspers.) I explained to Stanley—one of hundreds of lobsters being eaten that night on Cape Cod—what I learned in organic chemistry, that there is a finite amount of matter on our planet, that we are all made up of recycled building blocks: atoms. That what goes around comes around. A particle that was in T. rex shows up in Jesus and later in Hitler and still later in Mother Teresa and finally in you. Stardust and dog shit—it didn't matter.

The door slammed again; there was the shuffle of feet on the worn wooden floor, inconsequential talk, preparations . . . time warped and slowed.

No longer comfortably numb, I was out on the deck, staring up at the sky, knowing that my day would come too.

Ivan came out and put his arm around my shoulder and had the last word:

"Fuck it, let's eat." ☒

DENNIS MINSKY has been a resident of Provincetown since 1968, when he began working at Ciro & Sal's Restaurant, and has been a year-round resident since 2005. He has worked for the Cape Cod National Seashore, the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies, the Dolphin Fleet Whale Watch, and Art's Dune Tours. He is the chair of the Provincetown Conservation Commission and the Open Space Committee. He tries to write.



You Belong Here

PROVINCETOWN'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH LAWLESSNESS AND FREEDOM

By Mary Bergman

PROVINCETOWN HAS BEEN INHABITED by many different kinds of pilgrims and pirates, all varieties of saints and strangers strolling along the back shore or stumbling home along Commercial Street in the four hundred years since the *Mayflower* arrived on our shores. From the Pamet Indians, who hunted in Provincetown but lived in more bountiful Truro, to the Portuguese fishermen and the artists who came to paint them, to the LGBT community looking for liberation, Provincetown has “belonged” to many groups over the years, often at the same time.

Perhaps the most famous visitors were some of the earliest, the Pilgrims. In November of 1620, the 102 passengers on the *Mayflower* landed in Provincetown and stayed just five weeks, long enough to wash their clothes, raid corn from the Pamet Indians, and walk through the massive sand dunes. Local residents balk at vacationers declaring themselves townies after spending one week a year packed into a time-share on Beach Point, yet they hold tight to the story of these Pilgrims for dear life, despite their short stay—five weeks out of the last 20,696—that amounted to little more than a layover. For generations of Provincetown children, the very tip of Cape Cod, known as Land’s End, was the birthplace of America as we know it (or used to know it, for it has become nearly unrecognizable in the last two years) and became integral to the town’s identity. As a child growing up in Provincetown, I remember my teachers stressing the fact that the Pilgrims first landed *here* and *not* at Plymouth. When my teachers talked about the Pilgrims, and Provincetown’s role in the colonization of the New World, I can remember them beaming with pride. The women who taught my classes, with the same textbooks their parents used, had spent their whole lives here, and *this* is what they wanted everyone to remember.

The romanticization of Provincetown’s past continues to impact the way it is sold and consumed today. In *Provincetown: From Pilgrim Landing to Gay Resort* (New York University Press, 2007), Karen Christel Krahulik writes that the Pilgrims and pirates, two early visitors who didn’t spend much time in town, had a major impact on the town’s identity. The narrative of the *Mayflower*—the Compact, the Separatists “saints” coming ashore for their first washing day in the New



World—worked to establish Provincetown as a safe harbor, a place that cares for those fleeing persecution. However, Provincetown also gained the reputation of a “lawless oasis” where anything goes, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the arrival of smugglers and pirates, such as Samuel “Black Sam” Bellamy sailing in on the *Whydah*, and with the appearance of rum-runners during the days of Prohibition, such as Manuel “Manny” Zora on his vessel the *Sea Fox*.

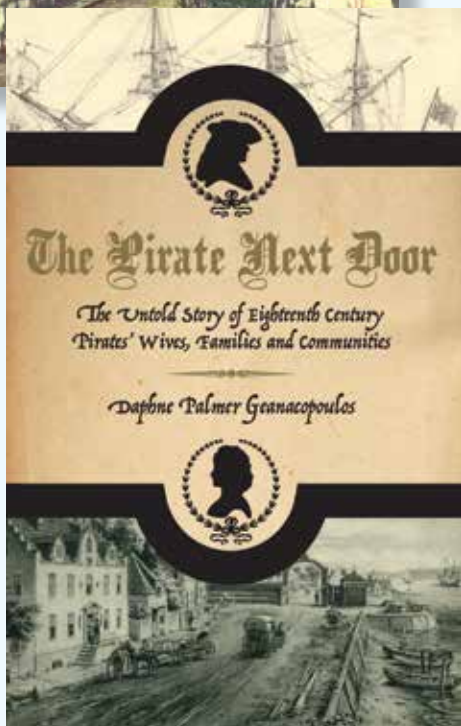
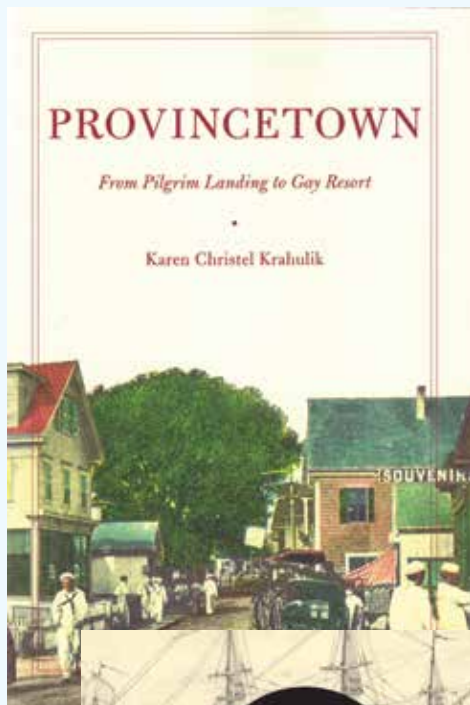
The unique geography of Provincetown has worked in shaping these two parallel narratives. Provincetown’s bayside, with its natural deep-water harbor and protection from Long Point, is a true safe harbor. According to local legend, the harbor not only sheltered the Pilgrims for five weeks, it was also a layover for Thorvald Eiriksson centuries before, when the Viking needed a place to repair the keel of his ship. The harbor is home to the town’s fishing fleet, now dwindling. Filled with ships captained mostly by Portuguese immigrants from the Azores, the working harborfront is a visual embodiment of the sea’s bounty. Every June, in a show of pageantry that rivals any drag show, the Blessing of the Fleet is a full-



blown Catholic pride parade that culminates with the bishop blessing boats from huge schooners to Eddie Ritter’s orange dory. The famous “Cape light” attracted artists in the late 1800s, when Charles Hawthorne founded the Cape Cod School of Art and the Provincetown artists’ colony came into being. In the decades that followed, an influx of artists and writers brought cutting-edge art and an increase in tourism—not to mention the influence of their bohemian lifestyles. Some sought even further refuge in the dunes.

Provincetown’s back shore—the great Outer Beach and the shacks that dot the dunes—recalls the town’s love affair with lawlessness and freedom. Even the Pilgrims marveled at the dunes: “sand hills, much like the downs of Holland, but much better.” Beautiful as they were, the giant dunes signaled to the Pilgrims how barren and sterile the land was. The Pilgrims wanted a place where their new society would not be like the scrubby pines—twisted and stunted by the wind. The seeds of their utopia would not be sown in the sands of the place the Puritans, witnessing the excesses of the carousing seafarers, dubbed “Helltown.”

We see the dunes reappear as a character in the stories of the pirate Sam Bellamy and his adventures on the *Whydah*. Daphne Palmer Geanacopoulos explores a previously untold history of eighteenth-century pirates in *The Pirate Next Door: The Untold Story of Eighteenth Century Pirates’ Wives, Families and Communities* (Carolina Academic Press, 2017). Bellamy, according to census records, hung out in Provincetown in 1715, two years before the *Whydah* and old Black Sam would both end up wrecked on the shoals five hundred feet from Eastham’s Outer Beach. (The *Whydah* was recovered in 1984, and



ghostly souls left to haunt Commercial Street and the vacant beaches. Where did everyone go? *OutBuzz* and *VICE* have both featured articles in the last two years decreeing that straight people have ruined Provincetown. Many agree that the high price of real estate has pushed everyone who isn't a millionaire—gay or straight—further and further from the tip of the Cape.

There is no question that Provincetown, like the rest of the world, is different now than it was in the '70s or '80s (although, interestingly enough, the year-round population in 1970 was also a decidedly low 2,900—did people panic then, too?). There are those who see these changes as a major loss, the death of a town they once knew and will never experience in the same way again. But Provincetown has never been preserved in amber, has always had to reinvent herself to survive at the edge of the world.

Now, as we approach the four-hundredth anniversary of the Pilgrims' landing, Provincetown is yet again striving to re-brand. Last summer, the Provincetown Visitor Services Board hired a New York graphic designer to create a logo and new slogan for the town. "You belong here" was unanimously adopted by the ten-member board. But those three little words began inflaming passions everywhere, from *Provincetown Banner* editorials to the Provincetown Community Space online group, to those who gathered by the "meat rack" benches and big blue chair in front of Town Hall. Some complained that the phrase was too tame for our "Wild West of the East" (hat tip to Norman Mailer), others were angered that the board had brought in a hired gun from the big city instead of soliciting input from the town's world-renowned creative community. Still, the biggest sticking point came from the last word—*you*.

Who, exactly, belongs in Provincetown?

Or, perhaps more importantly, is anybody who truly belongs here still left?

In the introduction to her book, Karen Christel Krahulik encapsulates the town's identity: "Provincetown's history reveals a larger story about community, citizenship, and leisure. It is a story that illuminates American hopes and dreams. . . . As Katherine Dos Passos implied in her 1936 travelogue *Down Cape Cod*, the history of Provincetown is like 'the history of the United States in little.'" Perhaps, like America itself, Provincetown is a community essentially built upon tenets of freedom and belonging, not exclusion. Something for us to celebrate as we approach our anniversary. 📌

MARY BERGMAN is a writer and historian whose work has appeared in the *Common*, *McSweeney's* Internet Tendencies, and elsewhere. Originally from Provincetown, she has since been exiled to Nantucket Island.

the recent discovery of a bone near the wreck has brought speculation that Sam's body has been found at last.) Local lore says Bellamy was trying to reunite with his love, Maria Hallett, who'd been exiled to a shack in the dunes, then called "Lucifer Land," after it was discovered that the unmarried Hallett was pregnant.

While portrayed in popular culture as "unemployed deepwater sailors from the lowest rungs of society," pirates were often considered to be heroes by those in their home ports. Some pirates acted more like Robin Hood types, bolstering the emerging economy in the New World by bringing gold and silver coins stolen from captured ships. Many of our Cape Cod communities were undoubtedly better off because of piracy.

These days, while Provincetown's sense of diversity persists, an argument has also been made for a community in decline. In December 2015, the *New York Times* painted a stark portrait of an empty town in winter, with only 2,800

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memorials

Harriet “Hatty” Walker Fitts

(1940–2017)

The following is adapted from remarks given by Michael Roberts on August 14, 2017, during a memorial for Hatty Fitts at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown.

HATTY WALKER FITTS set her course in life by two pole stars: Provincetown and the arts. Despite years of taking photographs, she never called herself an artist. But she had the arts in her DNA for all of her seventy-seven years. She was born and schooled in Forest Hills, New York, graduated from college and lived in Colorado, and then in New Jersey, for many years. She raised her sons Jim, Will, and Bruce Heron. But the through line over all those years was Provincetown, the place she always came back to, and where she spent the last three decades of her life with her beloved husband and childhood sweetheart, Bill Fitts. In recent years, both Will and Bruce have been nearby, as has Bill’s daughter, Eliza.

The other continuity for Hatty was the arts. Hatty’s great-grandfather founded the Walker Art Center of Minneapolis; her mother’s parents, the writer Harriet Avery and the musician Harvey Gaul, came to Provincetown in 1916, the same year the *Boston Globe* famously declared Provincetown “the biggest art colony in the world.” Her parents, Ione Gaul and Hudson D. Walker, brought Hatty and her twin sisters, Berta and Louise, to Provincetown every summer, starting in 1942, where the table talk was often of art and artists. Hudson was an art historian and Ione a painter, and together, from 1934 to 1940, they operated the Hudson Walker Gallery in New York, where they championed the work of artists like Marsden Hartley, Alfred Maurer, Käthe Kollwitz, and Joseph Hirsch.

Then in 1968, Hudson Walker joined with a visionary band of artists, patrons, and writers devoted to sustaining the art colony. They established the Fine Arts Work Center, where, for fifty years, twenty emerging artists and writers have come for seven months each year to devote themselves to their artistic disciplines. During that time, more than a thousand highly talented young people have been launched on artistic careers, with many going on to the highest distinction in American arts and letters. One of the earliest Fellows, incidentally, was a youthful artist named Bill Fitts, who was later to become Hatty’s devoted husband.

One cannot say enough about the importance of Hatty and her family for our town and for the Work Center. Hatty embodied what has been unique about both. She lived her life surrounded by art and artists and worked tirelessly for more than forty years to sustain the ideal of a community with the arts at the center. The Work Center would not have come to be without them, and it would not have survived and flourished as it has without Hatty and her family.

I want to say more about Hatty’s importance to the Work Center, but let me first mention some of her many other quiet but vital contributions to good works and to the life of our town. In addition to her work with the family foundation (supporting youth, art, racial integration, and alcohol and drug recovery), she served on the Provincetown Finance Committee, and also joined Bill in working on behalf of the Peaked Hill Trust, which manages several of the dune shacks where artists and writers have gone for almost a century to be inspired by the unrivaled beauty of the Cape shore. She was also a trustee of the Outer Cape Artists in Residency Consortium. A gifted swimmer and water



ballet champion, she taught legions of Provincetown children to swim at the West End Racing Club. And we mustn’t forget the special homemade cookies she dispensed personally each Halloween to almost 150 trick-or-treaters.

Like her parents and sister Berta before her, Hatty assumed central roles in the leadership of the Fine Arts Work Center, serving many years as both president and board chair. She plunged into every aspect of the Work Center’s operations. Through the Center’s frequent financial trials in past decades, her business and accounting studies from the University of Colorado proved highly useful. I can say from personal experience that she was an executive director’s dream trustee: generous, gentle, and kind, yet firm and devoted to the notion that orderly procedure was essential to sustain an organization. She ran a good meeting, and the one time her gentle voice became firm and authoritative was when she called the board to order. Yet there was always a word of encouragement and thanks for jobs well done, and generally forgiveness and indulgence when not so well done.

Hatty’s favorite duty as chair was superintending the great innovation she and her sisters originated: the annual Work Center Summer Auction. For four decades, it has gathered together hundreds of townspeople and many of our prominent artists in support of the Work Center’s Fellowships. As we kick off a summerlong celebration of the Work Center’s fiftieth anniversary with programs and exhibitions saluting our founders and Fellows in galleries and museums across Provincetown and the Cape, I am reminded of the epitaph for the great English architect Christopher Wren: “*Si monumentum requiris, circumspice*”—if you are searching for his monument, look around.

Provincetown has lost a great spirit whom the Fine Arts Work Center will always cherish.

— Michael Roberts

Gloria Vinci Nardin Watts

(1921–2018)

“THE OUTER CAPE lost an extraordinary member of our rich cultural fabric this past February 5, 2018. Gloria Vinci Nardin Watts passed away quietly in the Wellfleet home she had shared for more than forty years with her husband, Peter Watts. She had recently celebrated her 96th birthday,” Robert Rindler announced by e-mail to Gloria’s many friends.

Gloria’s story begins in New York City, where she grew up in still-rural Queens. She was one of four children born to Italian immigrant parents; her father designed evening wear, and her mother was a homemaker. At eighteen, Gloria married her high-school sweetheart, Warren Nardin, an architect, with whom she had four children: Terry, Doya, Todd, and Rani. They lived in Greenwich Village, among bohemians and artists of all stripes, while she studied at Cooper Union, then the Photo League.

In 1963, she suffered two horrendous blows: she was seriously injured in a car accident, and, soon after, her husband drowned while trying to rescue their boat. Subsequently, a friend, Todd Bolender, invited her and her two youngest children to share a house in Cologne, Germany, for two years. Returning to the States, her life eventually took a new direction when Marty and Jack Hall introduced her to the painter Peter Watts. After that night, she once proudly told me, she and Peter were rarely apart. They made a stunning couple, his Nordic looks contrasting with her dark Mediterranean beauty. They married in the early ’70s and moved to Cape Cod.

More than any other artist I know, Gloria’s artistry manifested itself in her daily life. Gloria and Peter were the fulcrum of our recurring Wellfleet summer community. I loved her sensibility: vibrant, intelligent, cozy, balanced, with a dash of quirk. These characteristics permeated her arrangement of furniture, flowers, objects; her cooking and gardening; her books, friendships, conversation; and her photographs and paintings.

Gloria excelled at the art of friendship. “Throughout her long life, she was drawn to the most original, talented, eccentric, and creative people, much like herself,” Robert Rindler says. Crossing borders of age, time, and geography, she struck up new friendships readily and maintained the old. Through falling-outs, breakups, divorces, and remarriages, she sustained deep friendships with differing parties, due to her discretion, wisdom, and genuine caring. Going to dinner at her home was a pleasure. One felt cared for and respected in the hands of an expert hostess and host, who together artfully curated the repast so that conversation and the sensual enjoyment of eating and drinking with friends and strangers was elevated to its warmest best.

Gloria’s oldest friend was the artist Rachel Brown. “Gloria lived across the tiny gated mews on Patchin Place in the Village from my family with her husband and their baby, Terry, in 1942,”



Rachel recalls. “I was six. She was the nicest, most beautiful person I had ever met.” It became a ritual of their lasting friendship for Gloria to tell an anecdote about Patchin Place over dinner.

Gloria met another dear friend, Rudolf Zwirner, when she wandered into his gallery in Germany in 1963. Then they lost track of each other. In a lovely twist of fate, Zwirner bought a house fifteen years later, just down the road from Gloria on Pamet Point Road.

“Peter and Gloria were neighbors from heaven,” says Larry Shainberg, who lived for over thirty years next door to them. Rudolf introduced them to other German families who became neighbors, and Gloria and Peter embraced them as well. Pamet Point Road was lined with their friends, and across Route 6 the community continued around the ponds, toward the beach. Gloria and Peter graciously supplied information and help to everyone. Gloria even handled the business of homeowners for German friends in their absence, and welcomed them with food and flowers when they arrived jet-lagged in the summer. She acted as the summer rental agent for her son Terry and others. She befriended everyone’s renters, children, and guests.

Gloria loved social events, never missed a party, opening, beach breakfast, or dinner. She and Peter were on everyone’s guest list. More privately, Gloria attended to her children, five grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren. She often saw her two youngest children from the Boston area and spoke weekly to her far-flung eldest. In the summers, the family convened.

Gloria’s artwork, from her early black-and-white photographs to her colorful still-life paintings, have received accolades. Her work focused on the preciousness of a single ordinary moment, person, or object. Her still-life photos of eggs, for example, summon us to marvel at their oval perfection, Gaa Gallery director Bettina Rosarius notes. The writer Hayden Herrera has one of Gloria’s paintings, a still-life of fruit on a table: “It makes Desmond and me rejoice. One wayward piece floats or flies above the others. It reminds us of Gloria, her insistence on joy, freedom, humor,

imagination, and the life of the mind. The others—vibrant but down to earth—suggest another side of her. Gloria was interested in regular things, like how to install a stove, transplant periwinkle. Things that confound other people were accomplished by Gloria with grace and no fuss.”

The Cherry Stone Gallery first exhibited Gloria’s color photographs in Wellfleet in 1971. A beautiful book of Gloria’s photos, published in 2012, is available at the Wellfleet Marketplace. Her artwork can still be seen locally at the Berta Walker Gallery, which is exhibiting her work, along with Peter’s, this summer.

Books were also her passion, and she bonded over literature with friends and family. “I see her always surrounded by books,” her youngest daughter, Rani Nardin, says. “And art. She turned the ordinary into the extraordinary.” A fan of Woolf and Nabokov, Gloria was always abreast of the latest literary voice. She read everything. Both she and Peter were also remarkably good storytellers. It raised her ire if she felt a story from her past had been told askew. She was fierce about the smallest detail. She was ferocious about accuracy. She and I once had a fiery argument at a friend’s dinner table over the correct usage of a word. Of course, she turned out to be right.

She was a terrific editor and edited most of the books authored by her friends Larry Shainberg and William McFeely. When Elaine McIlroy, director of the Wellfleet Public Library for thirty-four years, arrived in 1981, Gloria became her touchstone for creating a library to match the community. Fittingly, Gloria delighted at an idea of how people could honor her memory: by making a donation to the library in her name.

Gloria reaped what she sowed. Last summer, when Peter endured a serious health crisis and Gloria was unable to drive or care for him, friends and family stepped up. Their living room became a Grand Central Station of willing assistants. One friend, Dinky von der Heydt, flew in from Germany to help for a month. Gloria’s children arrived, expediting aid. Friends Robert Rindler and James Connors have been like guardian angels for several years, taking care of innumerable practicalities and bolstering spirits. Dinky returned in February, and was with them when Gloria died.

Her granddaughter and youngest son say farewell like this:

“Growing up,” Sophia Nardin writes, “I observed that living artfully is a vocation. Gloria and Peter’s house echoed with purpose, in the angle of a flower, the splash of paint on a floorboard—and, though concerned with surfaces, those were deep things. I loved to be there with Gloria, taken care of, lost in the grain of a photograph or the cotton print of a bedspread, momentarily freed from the temporal and the mundane.”

Todd says, “For as long as I can remember, Mom has made life heaven on earth for me. Dear beloved mother . . . Gloria . . . thank you. I hope heaven has found you, to make it complete.”

— Suzanne McConnell

Julian Popko

(1938–2017)

IT'S A SPECIAL DAY when you meet your best friend. I met Jules over twenty-five years ago when I was invited by a mutual friend to join them on Jules's boat for a day of fishing and lobstering. It was a perfect day in every way and I was hooked—hooked on exploring the wonders of Cape Cod Bay, and hooked on Jules. He became my “partner in crime” on our hundreds of days together on the water.

Every trip was a new adventure when you were with Jules. If we weren't running out of gas, which we did way too often, we would be calling for a tow because the boat's motor broke down. We never let bad weather keep us on shore. Jules would always say, “If there's water under the boat, let's go out!” There was one debacle when he sunk my boat—but that's another story.

We enjoyed telling and retelling the same old stories and jokes. Just being in one another's company, with a beer or a bottle of Truro Vineyards wine, was the best. Jules would begin every venture singing, “I'm in Heaven . . .,” and I know now we were.



PHOTO BY DAVID ROBERTS

Jules was the consummate family man. He and his beloved wife, Mary, nourished and cherished their five daughters, Monique, Ann Marie, Noel, April, and Crystal, who have all flourished as dynamic, creative young women. But Jules extended his love and support to a wide variety of friends from all walks of life, from fishermen and artists to businessmen and more. At Christmastime, Jules would give many of his friends a pack of photos, images that he had taken of them throughout the previous year.

Although Jules was a successful real-estate man, he was possessed of a strong artistic side and maintained a metal-working sculpture studio. This gave him an entrée to Provincetown's Beachcombers Club, where he lavished his generosity, supporting many artists in their work and producing lobster dinners for forty hungry shipmates. He became the champion of summer barbecues and Halloween and New Year's Eve parties, where he organized everything from posters and decorations to wine, beer, and prizes for costumes.

Jules left many examples of his creativity for everyone in the Provincetown community to enjoy. His sculptural expressions show up at the Pilgrim Bark Park, MacMillan Pier, and Lopes Square. We can relax on his lobster pot bench and photograph our children and grandchildren on Bubbles the Whale. Or, as we stroll on the pier, we can enjoy the colorful flags he donated and the metal striped-bass sculptures he created and installed. His most enduring legacy, the Lobster Pot Christmas Tree, lights all of our spirits during the holidays.

I'm thankful for his contributions to Provincetown and for our days on the water. I cherish the memories and miss him every day.

— Dave Roberts, with Bill Evaul

Paul “Black Fox” Koch

(1937–2017)

PAUL KOCH'S IDENTITY as “Black Fox,” his Native American name, deeply rooted him in a mythological matrix of human souls and the spirits who animate trees, birds, fish, and animals. A man who loved the ebb and flow of water, the draining and the overflow, he saw the seasons of the year as compositions in four great fugues. He was keen about taking photographs of the perfect curves of Cape Cod's parabolic dunes, barren in winter without the footprints of people. Orphaned before adolescence, he struggled to overcome misfortune with the enrichments offered by poetry, wisdom, and the rewards of connecting the concrete and the metaphysical. I was struck by one mesmerizing photograph he



PHOTO BY ANNE PACKARD

made of a series of smooth waves rolling, without breaking, evoking an image of infinite fluidity. He was an autodidact and a small-press publisher of his own poems and scholarly editions of classical writers (Press of the Four Winds, Provincetown), beginning with *The Similitudes of Demophilus*, whose numbered paragraphs expand on Aristotle's itemization of human virtues and vices.

A memorial for Paul Koch was held last year at the Beachcombers Club in Provincetown, which he attended regularly with his tribe of artists and writers. At the age of seventy, he formalized his learning by earning a bachelor's degree from Montana State University. His close friend of many years, the painter Anne Packard, recalled Koch's quest of perfection as akin to his love of music, remarking, “Paul weighted his optimistic ebullience with the gravitas of wise melancholy.” — CB



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Timothy Woodman

(1952–2018)

I FIRST MET TIM in 1970 at Skowhegan, the summer camp for young artists in Maine. One evening while we were there, I remember him walking toward me with raspberries, picked in the wild to share with me, slung in the front of his T-shirt, fragrant and staining it red. I remember him in a meadow surrounded by sheep, chiseling a figure out of a granite boulder, undaunted by the July heat, the flies, or a territorial ram.

Even as an eighteen-year-old, he was already an artist, not a student, a shining star, a comet of energy and talent. That fall, he went on to his first year of college at the Rhode Island School of Design, then transferred to Cornell. I went with him to Ithaca, and from then on we almost always lived together, learning how to have a life in art. He was ready, willing, and able to be interested in and supportive of my being a painter—something unusual at the time, especially when both people in a couple were artists.

After graduating from Cornell, he went to the graduate program for sculptors at Yale and then moved to New York City, where we both lived, worked, and showed for many years.

His death on a cold winter night has taken something away from all of us. His presence in the art community on the Outer Cape began in the early 1970s, when he started showing with the Cherry Stone Gallery in Wellfleet and, later, at the Albert Merola Gallery in Provincetown. Wellfleet became his home base, although we



PHOTO BY HELEN MIRANDA WILSON

lived away for parts of the year until 1999, when we moved to live here full time.

Something of a recluse, Tim nevertheless showed up for other artists in our community, always seeing their shows and creating a dialogue without words in his frequent exhibitions at the Cherry Stone and Albert Merola galleries.

His intelligence was resonant. He was a constant reader and addicted to music, always listening. He played the autoharp, the tuba, and the trumpet at different times in his life. He truly lived in the extra dimension that art provides,

where life has poetry and pathos and mystery. Many people found him to be wonderfully humorous and energetically kind, but he suffered increasingly from depression and anxiety. He resisted the dark pull of this gravity with courage and vigor for many years, but on January 5, in otherwise good health, at the age of sixty-five, he took his life. He leaves behind hundreds of sculptures, paintings, and drawings, sold from his shows and spread out around the world.

— Helen Miranda Wilson

Addison Parks

(1953–2018)

WHEN JOYCE CREIGER paired Addison and me for our inaugural show in 1998 at the Creiger-Dane Gallery on Newbury Street, little did we know that she had initiated our twenty-year-long friendship. Little did I know that my exhibition partner had already achieved renown in the '80s in New York, not long after graduating from the Rhode Island School of Design as part of the neo-Expressionists with shows at the Joan Washburn and Andrew Crispo galleries. He achieved parallel success as an art critic at *ARTS Magazine* and, when he moved to Boston, at the *Christian Science Monitor*.

In 1998, Addison drew on his New York and Boston connections to mount a show of hybrid abstraction at Creiger-Dane entitled *Severed Ear*, which, in retrospect, could only be considered postmodern anticipating the Provisionalist painting that Raphael Rubinstein labeled as such in 2007. It bespoke his ability to befriend a diverse group of artists and also a highly intuitive mind that could sense connections unseen to most people.

For more than a decade, Addison and his wife, Stacey Parks, ran the Bow Street Gallery in Cambridge. On occasion, he would host



PHOTO BY STACEY PARKS

luncheons with gallery members and other gallerists where there were vibrant discussions on art that one gallery member described as Pinterresque. These are memories of Addison at his

best, a brilliant conversationalist bringing people together to discuss the topics of art and life that defined his existence.

People remember him. One evening, I was conversing with someone at the Milton Resnick and Pat Pasloff Foundation, telling him about the death of Larry Deyab, who had been Resnick's studio assistant. Somehow the conversation turned to Addison's death, and he said Addison had reviewed his first show in NYC. Recently, a Boston artist contacted me out of the blue to tell me what an impact *Severed Ear* had on his life and art. Addison was not a happy camper in Boston, and justifiably so, since a certain fussbudget mentality reigns in this town that was not sympathetic to charismatic types like him. He was an enthusiast in an art scene defined by doctors and lawyers.

What is most memorable about Addison is his unbending resistance to those experts who wished to define him, whether it was the doctors who set timelines on his illness, or a stockbroker who thought he should go all tech stock in 2000. Sometimes I almost wondered if he possessed the wisdom of a shaman in the way his insights seemed to transcend the boundaries of practical knowledge. For all of these things and more, he will be greatly missed.

— Martin Mugar

John Joseph Ciluzzi

(1923–2017)

I FIRST MET John Ciluzzi in the spring of 1973 over dinner at the home of syndicated cartoonist Howie Schneider, at 599 Commercial Street in Provincetown. At the time, Howie could barely cook boiled chicken, and I was a complete vegetarian managing the nonprofit To Be Coffeehouse, so I'm guessing that I brought something vegetarian to eat. For an earlier dinner with Alice Brock, I invented a vegetarian spinach lasagna that Ciro Cozzi put on his menu at Ciro & Sal's for one night, so I'm guessing that I brought spinach lasagna to feed John Ciluzzi, who still spoke Italian fluently (albeit with a New Jersey accent).

At that particular moment in time, John and I probably looked like we came from different planets. I was at the tail end of my hippie period, and it wouldn't surprise me if I still had long hair, wore bell-bottom jeans with butterflies embroidered on one thigh, and a shirt that I bought at an army-navy store, plus my army combat boots. John, as always, was immaculate with a cashmere V-neck sweater, nice slacks, loafers, and one of his signature ascots. He is the only person I ever saw wearing an ascot (excluding an occasional person at a wedding) in my forty-five years of living on the Outer Cape.

The only thing I knew about John was that he owned the Masthead Resort (née Motel), and I wasn't even sure where the Masthead was located. Following a handshake, I tried to break the ice by saying, "I hear you own the Masthead Motel." John replied (and I can still hear the sound of his voice and his exact words in my head), "That's right. I own the best motel in town, I get the highest rates, and when I sell it, I'm going to get the most amount of money."

To say the least, I was dumbstruck. Little did I know that John and his wife, Valerie, would be dear friends for the next forty-four years, and that I would come to appreciate him as a man with a heart of gold, an eccentric sense of humor, and a competitive spirit.

John's competitive spirit was always evident on the tennis courts of the Provincetown Tennis Club. In hindsight, it amazes me that we



PHOTO BY TIM TRAN

managed to play tennis almost every day of the week, weather permitting. We even played together in a winter town team doubles league that competed indoors at a club in Yarmouth. The teams I remember included Terry Kahn and me, John Ciluzzi and Powell Murchison, Billy Henderson and Dorne Huebler, and our number-one doubles team, Art Hultin and Tom Conklin, newcomers from Michigan who flaunted dress codes wearing cutoff jeans for shorts, scruffy T-shirts, and multicolored bandanas (before the arrival of John McEnroe).

Ciluzzi, who was at least twenty years older than the rest of us, developed an approach that made him competitive—80 percent of John's game consisted of lobs and drop shots. When the strategy worked, John would utter a unique cackle that infuriated the youngsters and caused us to play worse.

John was president of the Provincetown Tennis Club for many years. In 1979, I served with John as treasurer of the PTC, and I was approached by a number of artists—especially Pat de Groot, Elspeth Vevers, and Peter Watts, from the homeless Provincetown Group Gallery—about creating a gallery space on the

second floor of the tennis club. Ciluzzi was an enthusiastic supporter of the idea, and we all pitched in for a Provincetown-style equivalent of a "barn-raiser," and built the gallery space over a weekend. Thirty-nine years later the same configuration, the same walls and lights, still function as a great gallery space.

John was one of the first advertisers in the inaugural edition of *Provincetown Arts* (1985), which was a twenty-four-page newsprint tabloid, created with waxed printed galleys that were "pasted" on boards after hours at the *Cape Codder* newspaper. We were just about to go to press when I received a frantic call from John. Billy Joel and Christie Brinkley had moored their yacht in front of the Masthead, and John had talked his son, John Jr., into ferrying them back and forth from yacht to shore. John wanted us to amend his *Provincetown Arts* ad with the sentence, "Boat moorings and launch service for visiting yachtsmen."

We later learned from John Jr. that Ciluzzi had never heard of Billy Joel and Christie Brinkley. He said to John Jr., "I don't know who this guy is, but I understand he's some kind of singer, so don't go too fast when you ferry them from their yacht."

Long before the advent of Citi Bikes, I remember the enduring image of John and Valerie on bicycles, weaving their way through the cars and crowds on Commercial Street. As always, John was immaculately dressed and coifed, with a hint of cologne, and usually sporting an ascot.

My wife, Lee, and I moved year-round to Miami Beach in 2012. When we heard that John died in 2017, I read his obituary in the *Provincetown Banner* and was reminded that John had been instrumental in starting the Provincetown Rotary Club. I also remembered John's many stories about being a ski trooper during World War II, and his annual visits to ski resorts in places such as Vail, Steamboat Springs, and Cortina, Italy, during his wonder years.

In a bohemian town of memorable characters, John Ciluzzi stood out as a throwback to old-world elegance, with a dash of humor, and a taste for living by the sea.

— Ray Elman

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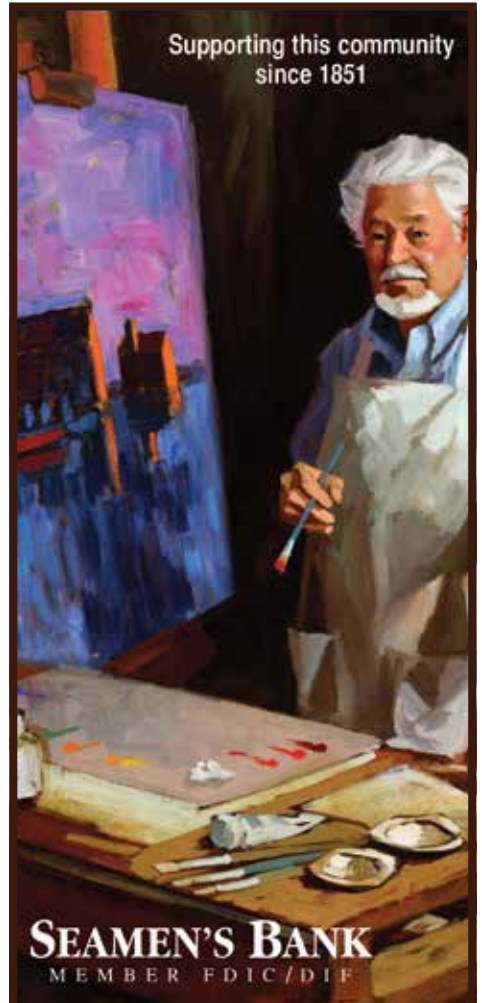
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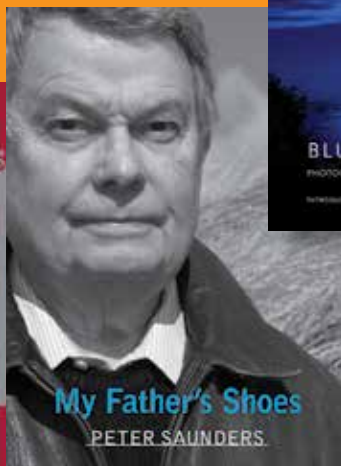


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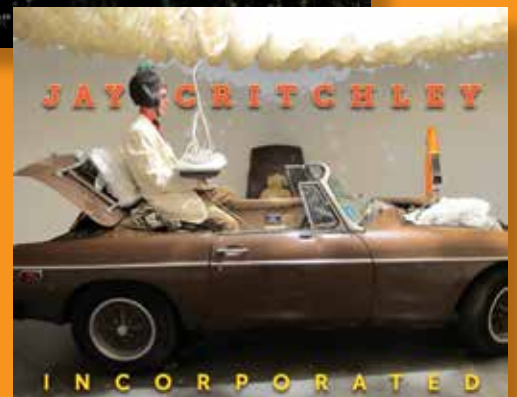
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Salvatore Del Deo, Long Point, Wine Sea, 1999, oil on canvas, 40 x 60"

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF FINE ARTS WORK CENTER IN PROVINCETOWN
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EXHIBITIONS

MAY 11 - JUNE 17 PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM
Celebrating 50 years of FAWC from the PAAM permanent collection

MAY 11 - JUNE 11 SCHOOLHOUSE GALLERY
The Visual Thread: Inspiration and the Fine Arts Work Center

MAY 25 - JUNE 10 BERTA WALKER GALLERY (Provincetown)
Roots and Branches: BWG & FAWC over the years
FAWC Fellows Connected to BWG/BWG artists Connected to FAWC

MAY 25 - JULY 14 FINE ARTS WORK CENTER HUDSON D. WALKER GALLERY
The Beginnings: The Fine Arts Work Center Takes Wing (Founders & Friends)

JUNE 1 - SEPTEMBER 9 CAPE COD MUSEUM OF ART, DENNIS, MA
Connections: Fine Arts Work Center Visual Fellows of Cape Cod

JUNE 16 - DECEMBER 31 PILGRIM MONUMENT AND PROVINCETOWN MUSEUM
Creating a Difference: The Del Deo Family of Provincetown/Art and Activism on the Outer Cape

JULY 31 FINE ARTS WORK CENTER
Annual Summer Awards Benefit in the Gardens of PMPM
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